

Disclaimer:

This eBook was written by Rita May. I am not a doctor or mental health professional and cannot be held liable for the information written here.

This book is meant to provide information about emotional, stress and binge eating. For medical assistance, please seek help from a medical or mental health professional.

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INTRODUCTION

You had a stressful day, it was particularly rough for whatever reason, and even though you had a fairly healthy dinner you find yourself craving a snack as you watch television. You immediately walk to the kitchen, you check out your snack stock in the pantry and you grab cookies, you reach for the chips, and for good measure, you grab a soda.

It was just a bad day, okay, I'm not normally like this. Yet, you repeat this habit. It becomes the norm. You realize you're easily mowing through a pint or two of ice cream every week and you have to buy double the number of chips because they just keep disappearing. You've entered into a vicious cycle of unhealthy eating and it's dragging you down.

As evidenced above, humans don't always eat just because they need to satisfy their hunger. We use food as a means to relieve stress. We use food as a reward. We use food as comfort. All of these are examples of emotional eating. It might make you feel better in that moment, but it isn't going to fix the emotional problems you're experiencing. So, you emotionally eat, you still have the emotional issue, and now you may have a big dose of guilt and a bad habit to deal with too.

But I want you to know that it's not your fault!!

IT'S EASIER TO EAT JUNK THAN IT IS TO EAT HEALTHILY

It's easier to buy pre-packaged food than to cook from scratch. Maybe you get home from work and you're too tired to cook dinner so you order food instead, most of the time. Maybe you can't or don't like to cook.

Also, the **food industry makes more profit from processed food than it does from healthy, unprocessed food.** Hence, they constantly bombard us with images of the things they want us to buy. They make these ads emotionally triggering on purpose. They send us the message that these foods and sugary drinks will make us happy, confident, loved. They

associate these foods with having fun with friends and family. These are very powerful marketing tactics.

It's also for their advantage that **our bodies are designed to crave sugar, salt, and fat because they were scarce when we evolved** many years ago. So, now, the craving is still there, even though these ingredients are easily available. Breast milk is also high in sugar and fat, so our brain associates the feelings of being loved and cared for with these flavors.

OUR CULTURAL TENDENCY MAKES YOU FEEL GUILTY

To add insult to injury, social media, celebrity magazines, and some TV programs, led by the diet industry, tend to talk about weight and food issues in moral terms: "I've been good today, I didn't eat the muffin at work."

I also did this in the past, not knowing any better. The diet industry has a very strong voice and it's hard to avoid being influenced by it.

But if someone feels guilty and ashamed when they eat something they enjoy and deny themselves all their favorite foods, they will obviously feel bad. What does someone who tends to emotionally eat do, when they feel bad? They eat, of course. So you can clearly see now that this is a great strategy to eat all the time *and* feel bad all the time .

That's why one of the goals of this book is to teach you how to eat like a natural eater and enjoy food without the side dish of guilt.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

According to the American Psychological Association...

- 43% of women and 32% of men reported overeating or eating unhealthy foods in the past month due to stress
- 33% reported that stress eating helped distract them from their stress
- 1/3 of those surveyed said stress eating is a habit
- 57% of overweight adults surveyed reported frequently engaging in emotional eating

- 9 out of 10 women in the US are unhappy with their appearance
- 81% of 10-year-old girls experience a fear of being fat
- Adolescent girls are more afraid of gaining weight than getting cancer, losing their parents, or nuclear war
- 2 out of 5 women would give up 3-5 years of their life in exchange for weight loss
- 97% of women confess they have at least one “I hate my body moment” each day

These statistics are shocking. It's really sad to see how many people are either not happy with their body or use food to make themselves feel better, or often both. And they don't know how to get out of this confused and painful situation.

MY STORY

I can relate to this as I started wanting to lose weight when I was a teenager. Later, I tried many diets, and gained plenty of experience with binge eating and emotional eating. My binge eating journey started in my 20s. Like most girls, I wanted to look attractive so started to undereat and overexercise to lose weight. After all, that's what most magazines and books recommended.

Then, at university, the added pressure and stress of preparing for exams and presentations weakened my willpower and I had to give in to my body's demand for food. It felt good and it calmed me down too. And so a 7-year long cycle of bingeing and restricting started.

When I felt worried, stressed, sad, or angry I turned to food and I stuffed myself. Then of course I restricted and overexercised to compensate. After repeating this pattern frequently I didn't even need to feel these emotions to have the urge to mindlessly binge. It became a habit. A seemingly uncontrollable habit. It started to affect many areas of my life, and I knew I had to stop doing it somehow. Giving up a deeply ingrained habit that gives so much comfort is hard. Besides, it's not like giving up smoking or drinking. You can't just stop eating; you need to eat, and food is always there calling your name.

But I made a decision and broke this self-destructive habit. I made changes in my personal life and changed my thinking habits too. These changes attracted positive things into my life which then also helped me to give up binge eating.

I did all these things intuitively. I didn't know what I was doing (practically rewiring my brain) but it worked. I understand now how it worked and I can teach you too to stop binge eating even if you've been doing it for years like I did.

Later I learned a lot about nutrition too (and even obtained a Nutrition and Diet Advisor certificate) and started to concentrate on being healthy instead of being thin and I found that my body wasn't demanding nutrients (in the form of cravings) anymore.

Although I successfully stopped binge eating, in my 30s I started stress eating. I didn't binge anymore, that was the past, but I definitely used food from time to time to release stress or anger. My life was actually perfect. I lived (still do) with the best man I could've ever wished for in a beautiful country, Switzerland (I'm Hungarian and he's from the UK). We had two gorgeous toddlers and I had a good job at a Research Institute as a Research Scientist.

After the birth of our sons, I went back to work and it was an exciting and exhausting time of my life. Our work with my colleagues was featured in the media multiple times, we were also chosen as one of the 100 Leading Global Thinkers in the category Innovators by Foreign Policy (FP, an American political journal).

It looked like the perfect life but there was too much pressure on me. It took a lot out of me to keep up with this high-level work and my demanding boss (a lot of people quit because of him or he fired them), the two toddlers, and the household duties at home. As I mentioned earlier, we don't live in our home country, we don't have grandparents around and my partner often had to work till late around that time.

I was constantly stressed to breaking point, I started to have anxiety, palpitations, and eye twitching, and I was impatient with our little boys. I felt like a failure at work, as a mum, as a partner, and as a friend since I couldn't give my best in any of those areas (yes, I was a perfectionist, one of the reasons for emotional and stress eating).

To release stress I turned to my old friend, food, again. Fortunately, bingeing wasn't an option anymore, I had managed to delete that programming from my brain. Nevertheless, I knew that my body didn't need that extra food and I wanted to find other ways to comfort myself. I also needed to figure out how to make my life a bit less stressful.

First, I started to learn about stress-reducing techniques and fell in love with meditation and self-hypnosis. Then I learned about other techniques that helped me gain control over my stress eating. Emotional eating and binge eating are habits that you formed by repeating them over and over.

First, you "accidentally" used food to distract yourself from your problems or to numb your uncomfortable feelings and racing thoughts in your head, and it worked. Our brains want to protect us and want us to feel good, and your brain registered that you felt good after eating. What happens then? Whenever you have these feelings again, it tells you to eat. You hear the voice in your head urging you to eat. So you do.

And you create strong neurological pathways in your brain connecting uncomfortable feelings with the urge to eat. You might have heard the saying: "What fires together wires together."

But due to neuroplasticity, these strong neurological pathways can be "deleted", and new, more helpful pathways can be built to replace them. In other words, you just need to break this habit and build better habits instead.

Now, I would say that I'm a recovered emotional eater but that would imply that there was something wrong with me. I want you to know that if you eat emotionally or binge eat, there is nothing wrong with you. You are perfect as you are now! It's only a habit that you can give up. If I could do it, you can too.

WHY YOU NEED TO GIVE UP DIETING

Up to 95 percent of diets fail in the long-term. It is hard for people to accept this because they have spent their lives wanting that dream body, to reach their "goal weight" and achieve what they have been promised if they followed their diet.

One of the reasons for the high percentage of these failures is that dieting can trigger a binge-restriction cycle. This is when you restrict yourself in one way or another during your diet, then reach a point where you can't handle the restrictions anymore, and suddenly you binge on all the foods you were denying yourself.

Nevertheless, you keep telling yourself that with enough willpower, enough endurance, and enough hard work, you can get there. As long as you stick to the plan, you will lose the weight and keep it off, and finally be happy.

You diet even harder because now you have extra weight to lose due to your binges, and consequently you binge even harder too. And this can go on like this for years and years while you slowly gain weight even though most of the time you are hungry and you are on a diet.

This book will show you how to forget the crash diets and prioritize foods that make you feel good and nourish your body.

A part of this book also concentrates on learning to accept and love yourself in the present, as you are now. If you don't like yourself now, you won't like yourself when you are thinner either. You will always find something about your body that doesn't look the way you want it to look.

STOP A BINGE BEFORE IT STARTS

When you are in the middle of a binge eating episode you feel like it's impossible to stop, like a monster has taken over your body and is forcing you to eat. Even though you want to stop, you can't. Your arm moves automatically between the food and your mouth. You eat as fast as you can. You don't even taste the food. This madness only stops when you physically can't eat anymore.

From this book, you will learn how to catch yourself before you start eating and discover my 6-step guide which can act as your blueprint to help you gain back control without having to use willpower. It will simply happen naturally. I really love this blueprint, and I hope you will

love it too. Imagine how good it will be to be able to stop before you even start eating and decide to not eat if you are not hungry.

IDENTIFYING YOUR TRIGGERS IS CRUCIAL

One of the steps to dealing with emotional eating is discovering what thoughts or circumstances trigger it. The habits you have allowed to form are sabotaging you now.

You know how it feels when you open the freezer to open a new tub of ice cream to soothe your sadness. You have used food to make yourself feel better. You have used food to fill your emotional needs.

Emotional hunger cannot be satiated with food. It might feel great at that moment, but **it doesn't get rid of the emotions that triggered eating in the first place.** In fact, it exacerbates them because you feel guilty about eating to deal with those feelings. You compound the issue by emotional eating and beat yourself up for not showing more willpower.

This book will help you identify the triggers causing you to overeat. You will get powerful tools to be able to differentiate between physical and emotional hunger, tune into your body's signals and find the thoughts or events making you turn to food when you are not hungry. We will work on changing your perspective about those thoughts and circumstances instead of avoiding them. Simply avoiding your triggers makes your life become smaller. I want you to expand your life.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Most people know roughly how to eat healthily and how to live a healthy lifestyle but the impulse to overeat doesn't come from the rational mind. If you have formed an overeating habit, you know that you shouldn't overeat, but you still do it, again and again. It's like having two parts of you: one that wants to stop overeating and one that doesn't.

Using social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt's metaphor, we can look at these parts as the elephant and the rider. The part that wants to stop you is the rider, your conscious mind. It

can make plans, it can think logically and see future consequences but it can't rule the elephant. The elephant is your subconscious. It has been around for much longer. It orchestrate the hundreds of tasks and operations our body does without us even noticing it (e.g. breathing, heart beating). It is also responsible for our emotions, intuition, and responding to all kinds of stimuli we receive from our surroundings.

We usually think that we are in charge of the elephant or we are not even aware of the elephant. But when we find ourselves doing something that we don't understand why we are doing, for example stuffing ourselves mindlessly, it's always the elephant in action.

A large part of this book deals with creating harmony between these two parts because it's a crucial part of changing your habits. If the rider and the elephant are not in agreement, you will always self-sabotage your healthier eating habits.

STRESS MAKES YOU GAIN WEIGHT, PLEASURE HELPS YOU LOSE IT

Research shows that our thoughts, emotions, feelings, beliefs, stress, relaxation, pleasure, and awareness all affect how we metabolize the food we eat. If you stress too much about eating perfectly, you cause yourself a lot of unnecessary anxiety about food and you are unable to enjoy the experience of eating anymore. As a matter of fact, if you want to do everything perfectly, you probably don't enjoy your life in general either. This self-induced stress combined with the stress originating from everyday life challenges increases your cortisol level. Cortisol shuts down digestion, makes us feel less pleasure, and switches on fat storage.

It's obvious that if you want to have a better relationship with food, your body, and weight, it's vitally important to reduce stress and increase pleasure in your life.

This book teaches you how to take better care of yourself, reduce stress, and find more pleasure in your life. Don't worry, these are all small things. I know you are busy, and I won't suggest spending hours meditating every day. This book will also show you how to enjoy your food without overeating so one cookie doesn't lead to a dozen.

I have included a few coloring pages too as it's well-known that coloring can reduce stress. If you've never tried it why not give it a go?

YOUR EATING ISSUES ARE YOUR FRIENDS, MAKE PEACE WITH THEM

Don't think about your eating issues as your enemy or something you need to fight with or defeat. It's actually a doorway and, if you are brave enough to look behind, it will lead you to the deeper issues that cause you to eat when you have strong emotions. It's a wonderful opportunity to grow and uncover the disempowering beliefs that may keep you trapped in other areas of your life too.

The best way to get free from your eating issues is to find the thoughts/beliefs that drive these habits. Our limiting, disempowering beliefs stop us from taking action when we want to change something based on past (negative) experiences. Our brains protect us from pain and seek pleasure. If you tried to stop overeating before and you didn't manage, your brain sees it as pain and wants to protect you from it. So it creates beliefs and thoughts like "I can't do this, I don't have enough willpower, Nothing works for me, I'm a failure".

These beliefs make you feel bad, give up, and go back to your emotional eating habits to make yourself feel better. In addition, these thoughts about yourself define your identity, your self-image, which in turn drive your actions and create your life. If you want to change your life, you need to change these thoughts and beliefs. If you only try to change your habits, you won't be able to stick to your new routine for long because your limiting beliefs will always pull you back without you noticing it. You will wonder why you are doing something you don't really want to and you might even think that something is wrong with you. Has this happened to you before? There is nothing wrong with you!

This book provides you with the system and tools to help you understand your food story, and replace your disempowering beliefs with empowering, positive beliefs about yourself, your body, weight, and your relationship with food.

WHAT CAN THIS BOOK DO FOR YOU

The first step in the direction of helping you break the habit of emotional eating is this workbook. I collected the best tools that worked for me and others. Everyone is different, and what works for someone may not work for another person with different life circumstances. That's why I suggest you try as many of the exercises as you can to find what suits you best.

By doing the exercises in this book, you will completely rediscover yourself and will equip yourself with many strategies to deal with your emotions without eating. By the time you finish this book, emotional eating will be something that you used to do. Do you want to do what I did in a fraction of the time, and get your life back? In that case, don't just read this book, but take the time to do the actual exercises, so you can get the maximum benefit.

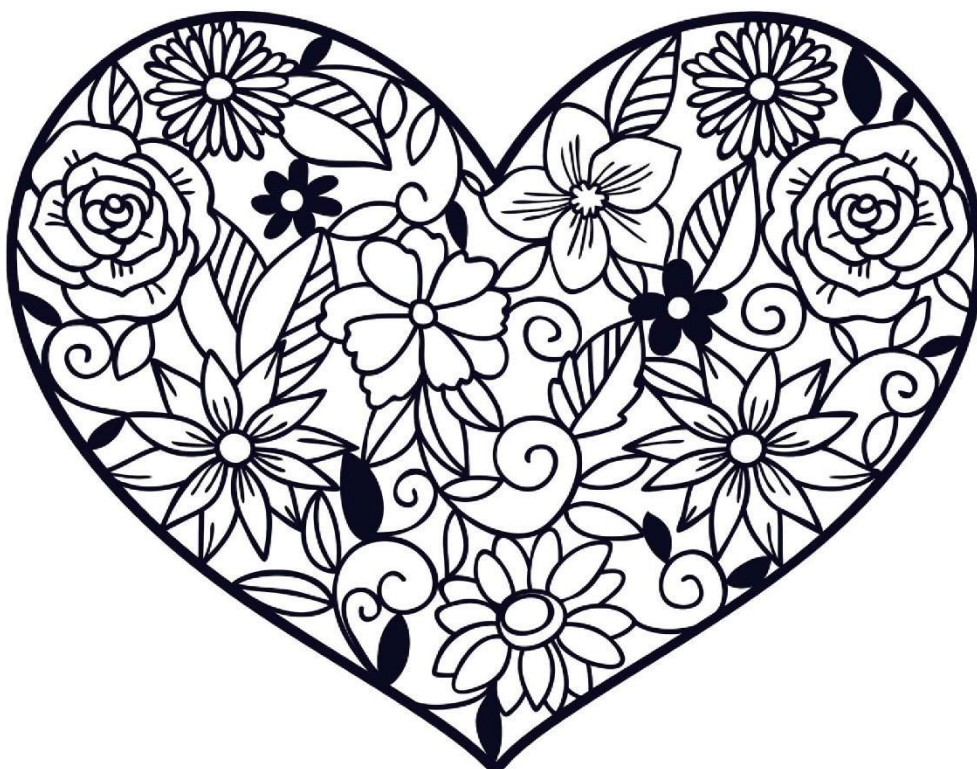
With my research background (I worked as a researcher/scientist for 15 years) you can be sure that everything I show you here is well studied and really does work. I'm trained to dig deep into data and find the best solutions. This is my "superpower".

I have also completed courses to become a Nutrition and Diet Advisor, a Health Coach and a Life Coach to be well equipped to help others. I felt like I wanted to teach other people who struggle with food, weight, and body image issues, to end their struggles too. Once you figure out how to do something you just want to share it with everyone, right?

I chose a Health Coaching program that didn't concentrate only on food but also on psychology, spirituality and brain science. I believe that all of these are beneficial for wellness.

Of course, it's impossible to squeeze everything into one workbook. You will see links to additional resources that I'm planning to make available in the future. If you are interested, you can click on those links highlighted inside the workbook and sign up for the waiting list to be notified when they become available. The more people sign up, the more incentive I will have to make them for you as quickly as I can. There's no obligation to buy any of the resources you sign up for. It only lets me know you are interested and helps me prioritize any deals, discounts or bonuses to you because you've shown initiative.

Disclaimer: I didn't write this book, and I'm also not qualified, to deal with clinical eating disorders, although these techniques would probably help those who struggle with that too. It is written specifically for those of us who have concerns around weight, body image, overeating, emotional eating, binge eating, and endless dieting.



HOW TO STOP EMOTIONAL AND BINGE EATING

Eating is a quick, effective, and easy way to switch off, zone out for a while, and escape from an uncomfortable feeling (such as stress, anxiety, boredom, fear of failure or success, loneliness, lack of control, or low self-esteem).

You learned to use food to anesthetize yourself accidentally through trial and error or from someone else (a parent, sibling, friend, or role model). This was the best coping mechanism you could come up with at that point in your life. It's not your fault; you did the best you could with the knowledge you had.

Through repetition, neurological pathways formed between uncomfortable feelings and eating (in your brain what fires together wires together), and a habit formed. Now the unconscious brain always suggests this solution to make you feel better when you feel uncomfortable because it knows that it works and it wants you to feel good.

Although originally this habit was formed to make you feel better, as your habit becomes more entrenched, the habit itself becomes the problem. You soon realize that the habit itself causes you more pain than the issue it originally helped you with ever did. It feels like it's impossible to stop doing your habit.

The reason for this is that a part of your brain is responsible to keep your habits alive, especially if the habit made you feel good when it formed. The main jobs of our brains are to keep us alive, avoid pain and seek pleasure. As emotional eating made you feel more relaxed, your brain uses strong urges to keep this habit alive.

Binge eating often starts with a restrictive diet. When you don't eat enough food or enough nutrients your "survival" brain freaks out. It senses a shortage in food supply so it starts to send you intense hunger signals and increases your appetite to get more food. It also slows down your metabolism so you don't use that much energy. It does all this to keep you alive and healthy. It doesn't know that your "thinking" brain (neocortex) decided to put you on a diet.

However, as a result, you are extremely hungry all the time and battle with uncontrollable cravings. Due to your slow metabolism, you gain weight even from eating an apple. No wonder you can't bear it anymore and you binge.

Then the next morning you panic and start dieting even harder because now you need to work off all the food you ate last night too. Of course, this makes the situation even worse. Your brain fights back making your hunger and cravings even stronger so you binge harder and more frequently. And this goes on and on... It is a habit now that your brain wants to keep because it feels so good to finally eat (you remember, your brain wants you to feel good) and this habit also keeps you alive.

Every time you binge because of your dieting habit or overeat to deal with your emotions, the responsible neurological pathways become stronger, consequently, your urges get stronger and more unbearable too. The only way to feel better now is by giving in, which in turn further strengthens the habit.

But don't worry, *neurological pathways can be changed due to neuroplasticity*.

If you don't give in to your urges, the responsible pathways will get weaker and weaker, and eventually, they will disappear. When your survival brain sees that there is no danger, it will stop sending you signals to eat. It's like a stray cat; if you keep feeding it, it keeps coming back. Once you stop feeding it, it will come a few times, but eventually, it will give up and go somewhere else for food.

Or think about a small path in a meadow. If you use it often, it gets wider and more visible. But if you stop using it, the grass takes it back. The same happens with the neurological pathways too.

I know it feels impossible to dismiss urges at the moment, but once you know how to do it it's not so difficult. It's not effortless but it's absolutely doable.

Important note: You need to eat enough food to be able to dismiss urges. If you are starving, your survival instinct will overpower you, and for good reason. You shouldn't dismiss that urge. Please also read the chapter in this workbook about how to eat to stop binge urges.

HOW TO DISMISS YOUR URGES TO BINGE OR OVEREAT

Ok, back to how to dismiss your urges to binge or overeat.

You are probably wondering how can you not give in when your urge is so strong and it feels so extremely uncomfortable?

The key is to wake up the “thinking brain” and ignore the “survival brain”.

The urge to binge or overeat is only a thought. This thought generates strong emotions and physical feelings in your body but it’s only a thought. It cannot do anything to you. If I want to really simplify it, you just need to let that thought flow through your brain and let it be naturally replaced by a new thought.

Let me prove to you how powerful your thoughts are.

Think about a huge dog chasing you. It’s barking and running after you. You run as fast as you can but the dog is getting closer. You reach the end of the road and there is nowhere to go. There is a huge brick wall in front of you. You can’t get over it, the wild dog is right behind you reaching for your leg If you imagined this scenario, your heart rate probably went up.

Now imagine sitting in traffic and you are already late to work. You have an important presentation, you need to get there in 10 minutes. The cars are not moving in front of you, you are getting extremely impatient and stressed. You are going to lose this important project, your boss is going to be furious, you might even lose your job. Your hands are shaking, your heart is racing, you are so frustrated you want to scream...

Sorry, I didn’t want to make you feel stressed, just wanted to illustrate that you can feel uncomfortable from simply having thoughts in your head. Nothing happened to you, these were just thoughts, but you probably felt physical and emotional changes in your body. You do the same to yourself with your thoughts when you have an urge to binge or overeat.

Ok, let’s calm down a bit.

You have a calm, wise state inside you, where you can always go back when the mind settles down. Think about it like the clear blue sky that is always there above the clouds. When you have an urge, and all those thoughts about eating are racing in your head, it's like the weather. Your thoughts are like the clouds, the rain, the wind, or sometimes even like a huge storm. But sooner or later the weather calms down and goes back to the clear blue sky. Even during the biggest storm, the clear blue sky is always above the clouds.

So when an urge comes, the best thing to do is to let the weather do its thing, and simply wait for the clear blue sky to appear, i.e. wait for the mind to settle down. Don't jump in to try to change the weather, you can't. It will suck you in, spin you around, and you get soaked. Just look at the weather from the outside and wait for the clear blue sky to appear.

Let your thoughts come and go in your mind and just observe them as they were clouds in the sky or as you were watching a film or listening to someone else's conversation. Don't get involved.

Not all of your thoughts are your thoughts. You picked some of them up somewhere at some point in your life and your mind keeps bringing them up. You aren't consciously creating your thoughts most of the time, they just come from who knows where.

All sorts of thoughts run through your mind all day long, and they create your experience of the outside world. Some thoughts feel unimportant and you don't pay much attention to them. For example: "What time is it?" "What was that noise?" "Her hair looks nice." You don't hang on to these thoughts, they just come, and you let them go.

But other thoughts feel really significant and we take them very seriously, such as: "Why didn't he call me yet? He doesn't love me." "I could eat that whole thing." "I can't stop eating." You keep repeating these thoughts, you keep them tight and don't let them go.

Then, when you act on these thoughts, you strengthen the habit and these thoughts will come up more frequently and will generate stronger emotional responses. If you could just let them come and go like you do with your unimportant thoughts, they wouldn't make you feel the way you feel.

You don't have to take your thoughts so seriously. You can accept them or let them go. It's your decision. And if you decide to let them go, as you will with your urge thoughts, you don't really need to manage or change them. After a while, these thoughts will leave you and new thoughts will come, as they always do.

Now you can see, your overeating or binge eating habit is nothing more than a series of temporary, impersonal thoughts, no matter how important, valid, and worthy of action they look at that moment.

You don't need any willpower to fight them. You don't need to fight them at all. All you need to do is letting them go. Dismissing an urge using willpower is like standing in a big, raging river and trying to do yoga. It will be extremely difficult, even impossible. The water will take you off your legs and will carry you away. But if you get out of the river, you can do yoga on the shore easily while watching the raging river from a safe place.

As we can't control the river, we also can't control our thoughts, but we don't need to. If you just wait, you will see your old thoughts washed away and replaced by new thoughts and your experience will change.

When your mind, your thoughts are revved up (during an urge), you cannot think clearly, you are in an unintelligent state. You probably said to someone something you didn't mean to when you were furious. When you are very angry your mind is also revved up and in an unintelligent state. Your calm, clear blue sky state is wise and intelligent. Your goal is to get back to this state.

So first, take a few deep breaths. Breathing deeply, with slow and steady inhalations and exhalations, signals our parasympathetic nervous system to calm the body and mind down.

Then follow the next steps.

6-STEP BLUEPRINT

Use this 6-step blueprint to dismiss the urge to binge eat, eat when you are not hungry or continue eating when you are already full.

You can use all 6 steps or only a few at a time. When you are in the middle of a binge eating episode you may only be able to use Steps 3 – 5 and that's ok. Don't worry, it's fine. Just take baby steps and you will get there.

STEP 1 PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL HUNGER

Before you start eating ask yourself: Am I really hungry? Physically hungry?

To help decide, I included this list to be able to distinguish between physical and emotional hunger.

For more detailed comparison consult the ***Physical and Emotional Hunger Cheat Sheet.***

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMOTIONAL & PHYSICAL HUNGER

EMOTIONAL HUNGER	PHYSICAL HUNGER
• Strikes suddenly • Urgent & overwhelming • Craving for specific comfort foods • It's a craving we can't get out of our head • It isn't over when the stomach is full • Eating triggers negative emotions (guilt, powerlessness, shame)	• Becomes stronger gradually • It can wait • Anything sounds good, including healthy foods • Felt in the stomach (growling, pang) • Stops when the stomach is full • Eating is satisfying, positive emotions

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- If you are physically hungry eat a nutritious meal.
- If you are emotionally hungry continue with the following 5 steps:

STEP 2 DISTANCE

If possible, step away from the food for a few minutes. If you are in the kitchen, go to another room. If you are in a restaurant, and you are full but can't stop eating, go to the bathroom.

STEP 3 DELAY

Set your timer for 10 minutes and don't eat during that time. If you still want to eat after 10 minutes, you can, no problem at all. But during this time follow the next steps.

If you are already in the middle of a binge eating episode just try to slow down. Taking a big breath between bites can help to get out of your unconscious urge state to the conscious thinking, "clear blue sky" state.

You might not be able to stop eating, and that's okay. How much you eat isn't as important as getting back into a more mindful state instead of the unconscious, mindless eating state. You will get there!

STEP 4 DISSOCIATE - SELF-ASSESSMENT

Take a few deep breaths go slow down your racing mind.

To get back to your intelligent, thinking, conscious state say your thoughts out loud and add to the beginning: "My revved up brain is telling me....."

You can also call this part of your brain the lower brain, primitive brain, or survival brain. Some call it the lizard brain, or "the pig" even. Call it whatever you like.

For example:

- My revved up brain is telling me to eat because I deserve it, I had a bad day.
- My revved-up brain is telling me that one more slice of cake won't do any harm.
- My revved-up brain is telling me that I will eat less tomorrow.
- My revved-up brain is telling me that I will exercise more tomorrow.
- My revved-up brain is asking me if I want to really walk away from this nice food?
- My revved-up brain wants me to admit that I really want to eat.

And so on.

This is Awareness. Now you realize what's happening, who's voice is that in your head. Congratulations!

Now you can just wait and let these thoughts leave you and get replaced with different thoughts. Just let them go. They don't serve you.

However, these thoughts may be deceiving and you might not be able to tell yet that these thoughts are not true, they are not worth paying attention to. You feel tempted to believe them and act on them.

If you feel this way, the next step is to stop and think about what's going on. Now you can decide whether these thoughts are true or not, whether you truly need more food, or whether eating/binging will make you feel even worse than the urge feels. Will eating lead to happiness, self-pride, and self-respect, or self-criticism, a feeling of failure, and low self-esteem?

Now you are in the conscious state of decision making.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are these thoughts really true?
- Is it possible that they are not true?
- Were these thoughts helpful in the past?
- What is the outcome of overeating/binging? How am I going to feel physically and emotionally after eating? How about the next morning?
- Is it going to take me closer to my goals or not?
- Is it going to nourish me?
- What am I emotionally hungry for? (Maybe you just want to relax, rest, or you want excitement, or love, or pleasure, etc.) Think about it.
- Who do I want to be in this situation (my old self or my future self who has no food issues)?

When you simply react to a trigger as you used to do, you are behaving like you have done in your past and you will create more of your past by reinforcing your habit.

When you respond to the trigger as the future you, who you want to be, you deliberately create that future.

Dissociate – look at yourself from the outside as if you were another person, preferably a person who loves or cares for you. “Get out of your body”, look at your body eating and ask the following questions:

- What is this woman (you) doing?
- Why is she doing that?
- What else could she do?

This leads us to the next step.

STEP 5 DISTRACT

Think of things you could do instead of eating. This could be anything else that isn't eating: talk with someone, walk around the block, do a few jumping jacks, clean the kitchen, drink something, pick up a book, anything that can further remove you from the unconscious state (the storm of thoughts). Or you can just simply sit and observe your thoughts flowing through your mind. Remember, the aim is to get back to the intelligent, thinking state, the clear blue sky and get out of the mindless, urge state.

STEP 6 DECIDE

The next step is to decide and act. You need to act on the information. You are aware of your bingeing/overeating intention, you have caught yourself heading in the direction of bingeing and now you have to make a choice. Are you going to feed or starve your stray cat (habit)? Are you going to jump into the raging river or stay on the shore?

Your survival brain will make you fear the change. Everything unfamiliar is registered as a danger in your brain until the opposite is proven. The brain likes the familiar because that's already proven to be safe. It will make change look scary and unfamiliar. It will try to

convince you that it's safer to remain the same, that you can make up for the overeating tomorrow with extra exercise and a strict diet. It will try to convince you that feeling your emotions instead of numbing them with eating is dangerous, and it will try to persuade you to stick to the familiar and just eat. Just eat!

It can be extremely convincing because it uses thoughts, sentences that worked before. You acted on those thoughts before. But now you have a choice.

What are you going to do?

Will you suppress the uncomfortable feelings your urge creates with food? Or:

Will you face your feelings without eating and wait for the clear blue sky to appear?

The decision is in your hands.

Decide whether or not you are going to eat.

If you don't feel like eating anymore, that's great.

If you still want to eat, that's totally fine too. Don't worry, over time you will decide more and more often not to eat. Be patient with yourself. Don't beat yourself up if you decided to eat, it's ok. Instead, enjoy the meal you decided to eat thoroughly.

If you can, try to eat slowly, mindfully, and enjoy, really savor every single bite. Try not to stuff yourself mindlessly. Taste the food and when you don't find it enjoyable anymore, stop eating it.

It's fine if you can't do it right now and you eat quickly and mindlessly to feel better. Use the **Mindful Eating Guide** later in the book to learn how to eat slowly and mindfully and practice it as often as you can.

Moving forward let's make a plan for the future.

STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

When you are calm and have no urges to overeat, sit down, and prepare yourself for future episodes.

Use the **Self-Awareness Exercise** below and the **Food and Lifestyle Journal** (separate) to find your triggers and reasons for emotional eating and think about how you could disrupt these patterns. In the Journal you can track your food, sleep, feelings, hunger signals, and many more things that will all help you identify the reasons for overeating. Discovering the reasons for your overeating habit can help you immensely.

SELF-AWARENESS EXERCISE

Eating issues are the doorway to our real issues that we need to look at. These issues may be relationship, career, parenting, money, love, family, sexuality, or spirituality related, or a combination. It can be helpful to look behind the door to see what your eating challenges are trying to teach you.

Stop seeing your eating challenge as the enemy. It's quite the opposite; it's your friend, it's an opening. Willingness to walk through that door changes everything.

It will help you become more nourished, happier, and more able to create the life you want.

Most of the time emotional eating is the last straw. It's been building up for several hours (sometimes even days) in advance by our daily habits, beliefs, self-talk, and automatic thinking. Then one final, maybe even insignificant, event makes you break down and hit the ice cream box.

The goal of this exercise is to build awareness of the triggers of your eating episodes. Maybe it's a time of day, or a situation, a type of food, a person (or being alone), a feeling – or all of these.

Describe in as much detail as possible what you are experiencing, or remember experiencing, at each stage. Then go back and review. Look for common features. Look at the steps you took.

What happened 1-2 hours before your overeating episode?

What were you doing?

What were you thinking?

How did you feel emotionally?

How did you feel physically?

Where were you?

What time was it?

Who was with you?

What happened immediately before your overeating episode?

What were you doing?

What were you thinking?

How did you feel
emotionally?

How did you feel
physically?

Where were you?

What time was it?

Who was with you?

What happened during your overeating episode?

What were you doing?

What were you thinking?

What were you feeling,
emotionally?

What were you feeling,
physically?

Where were you?

What time was it?

Who was with you?

What happened after your overeating episode?

What were you doing?

What were you thinking?

What were you feeling,
emotionally?

What were you feeling,
physically?

Where were you?

What time was it?

Who was with you?

Complete this worksheet every time you have an episode of binge eating or emotional eating. Be honest and thorough. You are collecting data so that you can analyze your own patterns.

As you gradually increase your self-awareness (be patient with yourself, it will take time), you will recognize what triggered your overeating urge and will be able to stop a few minutes before eating and do the 6-step processed I described in the previous chapter.

TYPICAL REASONS FOR OVEREATING

Here are some typical reasons for overeating.

PERFECTIONIST MINDSET

You ate something that you didn't want to/"shouldn't" and you feel like you might as well eat whatever else you didn't let yourself eat before because your diet is ruined anyway. You will start your diet perfectly tomorrow. This is a very common reason for binge eating and overeating.

PHYSICAL REASONS

Constant physical hunger can also trigger binge eating and overeating so make sure you look out for the following habits making you hungry:

- **Not drinking enough water** Being thirsty is a very similar feeling to hunger. Make sure you drink enough water every day. If you think it's a problem for you, track how much water you drink. You should aim to drink about two liters/day.
- **Not sleeping enough** Lack of sleep causes irritability, lack of focus, and hormonal imbalance. If you haven't had enough sleep your ghrelin level will increase (this gives the hunger signal) and your leptin level will decrease (this gives the "I had enough food" signal), making you feel hungrier than usual. You should aim to sleep 7-8 hours/day.

- **Chronic stress** Chronic stress causes physical and emotional hunger. The reason for physical hunger is the imbalance of ghrelin, leptin, and insulin hormones again. It's vitally important to reduce stress in your life.
- **Too restrictive diet; not eating enough** This is straightforward. Besides making you feel hungry, eating too little slows down your metabolism, which means you will need to eat even less in the future to keep the weight down.
If you avoid certain foods for weight loss purposes and you restrict yourself for a long time, binge eating might just be the end of your willpower. As you know that you will not be able to eat this again for a long time, you want to make up for the past and future lost opportunities as well.
- **Grazing all day long** This becomes a habit and means that you will be hungry frequently because your body expects food. It also results in too much insulin secretion.
- **Unbalanced diet** Additives and too much sugar can mess up your hunger signals. The more you eat these processed foods the more you crave them.
When you eat highly processed food that is full of addictive chemicals, you simply can't stop eating it. This is simple chemistry, it's not your fault. The food industry spends a lot of money developing these foods to make you buy more of their products. Their researchers combine additives, fat, white flour, salt, or sugar to make these extremely addictive foods. Make sure you eat mostly whole foods and occasionally the processed foods you love.
- **Low nutrient diet** The body is hungry for nutrients. Make sure you eat whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, protein and complex carbohydrates every day.
- **Mindless eating** If you eat too fast, or in a distracted or zoned out way, your brain doesn't have time to register your hunger signals, so you will not realize when you're full. Make sure you eat slowly and mindfully.
- **Some medications increase hunger** Some antihistamines, blood pressure medicine, diabetes medicine, antidepressants, and steroids may increase hunger too.
- **Candida overgrowth** This can make you crave sugar.

HABITUAL EATING

- You had to clean your plate when you were a child and it became a habit.
- Your parents, grandparents comforted or rewarded you with food, or you always celebrated with food so you crave food for comfort, or reward or to celebrate.
- When you got home from school you always had something sweet (e.g. cookies) for a snack. Now every time you get home from work you crave something sweet.
- You need to eat something when you watch TV. It's a habit you developed.
- You snack on the ingredients while you cook. This is also a habit.

HEDONIC OVEREATING

The food is so tasty you don't want to stop eating it. It is fine to overeat on special occasions when the food is so delicious you don't want to stop. However, if you do it all the time and it leads to weight gain that you are unhappy with you need to diversify your joy. You need to find other activities that give you pleasure other than food.

EMOTIONAL REASONS

These are typical reasons for emotional eating.

FILLING A LACK WITH EATING

- Lack of love,
- lack of attention,
- lack of self-worth, self-confidence
- loneliness,
- boredom, monotony (lack of excitement, goals, passion),
- lack of sleep,
- lack of coping mechanisms (stress, nervousness, anxiety, worry).

ANGRY EATING

- You need to chew on something constantly because you can't say something that you want to.
- You always need to eat something after an argument or fight to release the pressure.
- When you are stressed, you crave food, you want to chew something.

FEAR OF CHANGE

These are subconscious thoughts that make you overeat or binge.

- I can't eat my favorite foods anymore because I need to lose weight. (So you restrict these foods and then binge on them later.)
- I won't be able to keep the weight off and people will laugh at me. (It's better to not try to lose weight at all so I won't fail again.)
- People will treat me differently when I'm slimmer (my overweight friends will not like me anymore).
- I will have to finally find a partner, I won't have the excuse of being "too fat and nobody likes me" anymore.
- I can't suppress my bad feelings with binge eating, I will have to face my feelings, problems and will have to find a solution for them.
- I will not have the excuse "I'll do it when I get thin" available for me anymore.
- Sometimes women try to protect themselves from a past (sexual) trauma by growing a "protecting" fat layer, so men wouldn't see them desirable anymore.

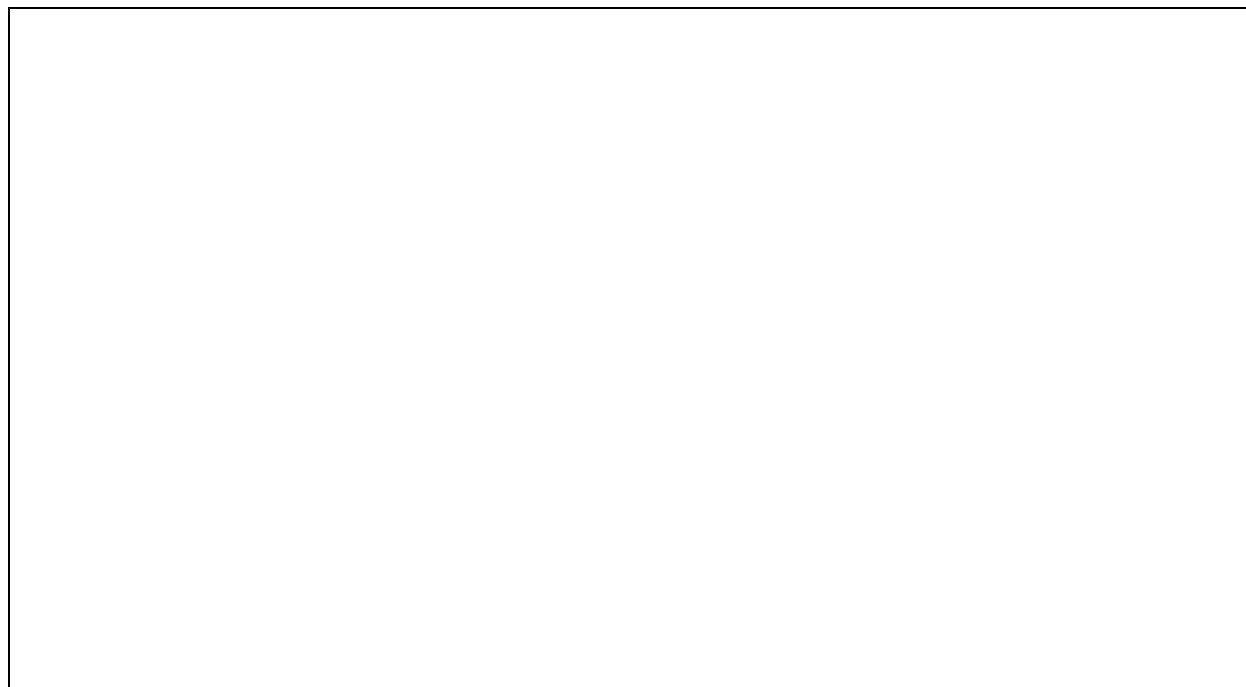
Research shows that if you crave soft, creamy, comforting foods (cakes, ice cream, peanut butter), most likely you eat to fill a lack in your life. However, if you crave crunchy food, such as chips, peanuts, cookies, pretzels, you eat from anger or to suppress something you would want to say.

Take time this week to really pay attention to your habits and triggers. Pause before you start eating and breathe in and out six times. Try the 5-5-5 breathing exercise mid-binge or before you start to eat. Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold it for 5 seconds, and breathe out for 5 seconds.

Start to notice the habits and triggers that set off your “hunger button”. Then do the 6-step process to dismiss the urge to eat. Do this often enough and you won’t need to employ any willpower to eat less, just awareness.

Once you find your emotional triggers and/or physical reasons for overeating, list them here.

List possible steps to take, or specific activities you will do, when you feel the urge to overeat or you know you are in a triggering environment, with triggering company, or around triggering food. Say out loud what your revved up brain tells you to do, stop and think if it’s true or not. You want to wait for different thoughts that are bringing you closer to your goals. You want to stop listening to your inner critic and be mindful about the words you are using. Maybe you also need to concentrate on your negative and positive associations you will write down in the Inner Motivation chapter. Maybe you want to temporarily avoid the triggering foods, people and situations until you can confidently dismiss your urges. Don’t worry if you can’t come up with many ideas at the moment. From the next chapters you will learn how to deal with triggering situations without overeating.



ADOPT NEW HABITS

It's easier to give up a negative but pleasurable habit if we replace it with a positive, pleasurable habit. When we give up a bad habit, our brain automatically starts to search for another activity that can provide the same or similar good feelings. That's why smokers put on a bit of weight when they stop smoking. They find the missing pleasure in eating. So it is very important to choose a new habit wisely.

The results of an experiment with drug addicts clearly demonstrate this. The addicts were in prison and they were divided into three groups. The members of the first group gave up drugs because of an outside force, in other words, they did not have any inner motivation. This group started to use drugs again as soon as the force stopped: when they left the prison.

The second group really wanted to stop using drugs; they had an inner motivation. They managed to keep away from drugs for a relatively long period of time, some as long as 2 years. They only fell back into using drugs when they got into a stressful

situation. The reason for this is that they did not find a replacement behavioral pattern that would have helped them to relieve the stress.

The third group had a new, positive habit to replace the old habit and give them the pleasure they felt from the drugs. Some of them found their happiness in a relationship, others in spirituality, and some of them in a career that they were passionate about. Most of the members of this group were able to give up drugs forever. However, some of them fell back into using drugs after about 8 years because they didn't do the next step.

Each time you manage to dismiss an urge to overeat give yourself some kind of reward, reinforcing to yourself that the new habit gives you pleasure. Don't wait with the reward until you haven't had a binge for months. You can already celebrate if you managed to stop for just 2 minutes before your binge to observe your thoughts. Or if you managed to take a few breaths during the binge to slow down. Reward, celebrate every single time when you managed to stop mid-binge. I want you to know that you can stop any time!!! You don't need to eat until it's painful just because you have started to binge. Celebrate even if you managed to eat just two bites less than you would've normally eaten. Definitely reward and praise yourself when you managed to dismiss an urge to binge.

You need to reward the smallest results. The reward should come immediately after the positive action, not later.

What makes a good rewards? Of course, the reward shouldn't be a slice of cake, but something that is not related to eating. For most of us praise is enough. You can also get ideas from video games, where the game rewards the players with points, medals, gifts or moving up the high score list.

Try the ***Self-Care Tracker*** to reward yourself for taking care of your body.

How are you going to reward yourself?



Introduce self-care routines to prevent emotional eating triggered by stress, overwhelm or tiredness

For example sleep routine, rest and relaxation exercises, exercise, meditation, writing down 3 things you did well at the end of the day, or writing down 3 things you are grateful for at the beginning of the day. You will find more examples in the next chapters too. **How are you going to take better care of yourself? What are you going to implement?**



Improve your diet and lifestyle if you overeat due to constant physical hunger

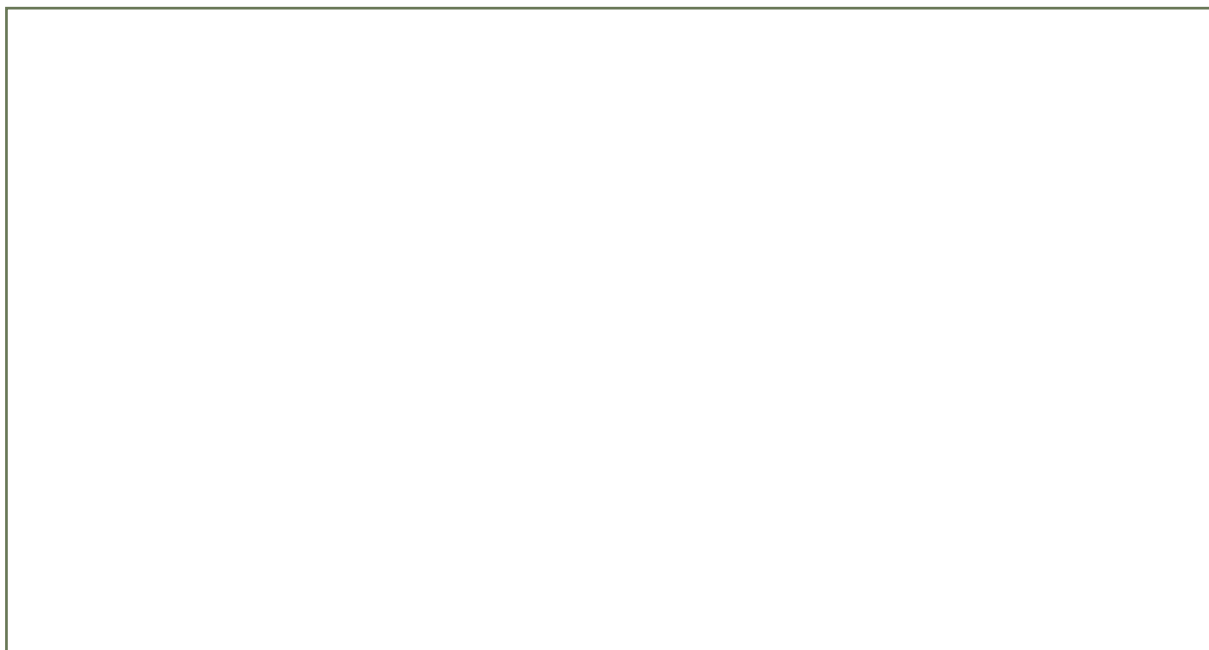
For example drink enough water, establish a sleep routine, find stress relief techniques, eat slowly and mindfully, do not graze all day, do not follow a very

restrictive diet, eat enough, give up dieting and eat balanced, nutritious meals so your body is not starving, eat your favorite but not so nutritious food in moderation too (we crave what we can't have, so reassure yourself that you CAN eat anything you want), and read the side effects of your medications.

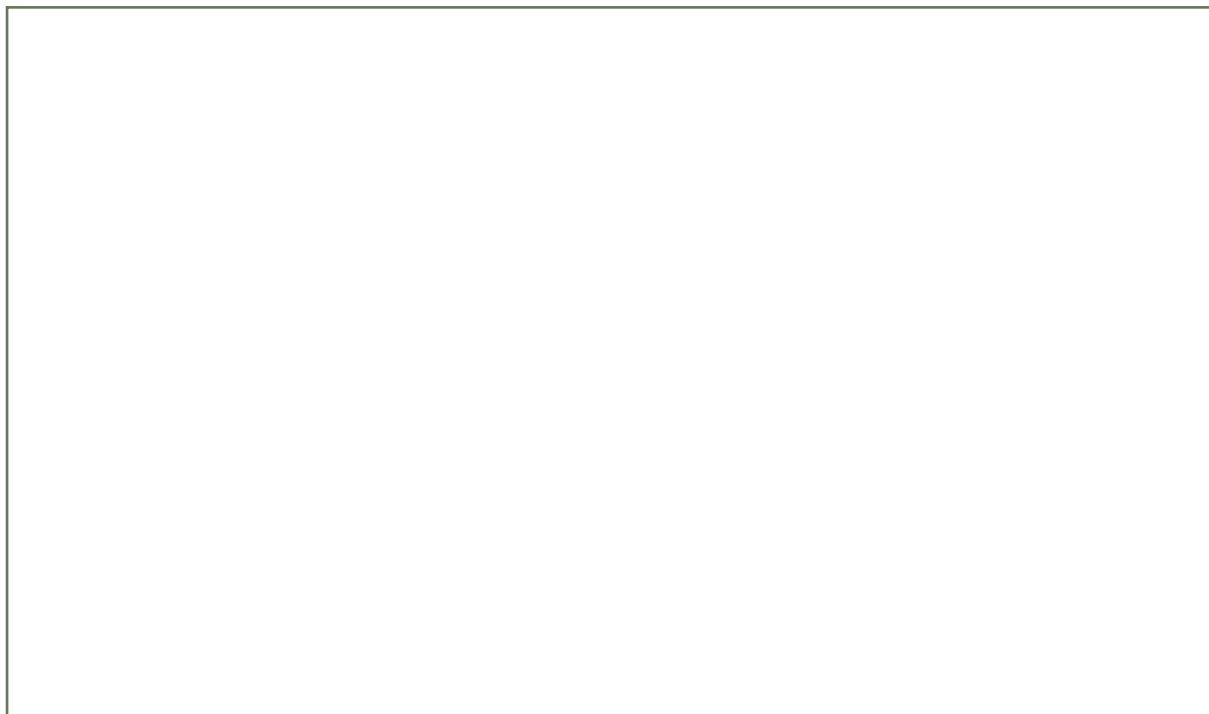
What are you going to implement?

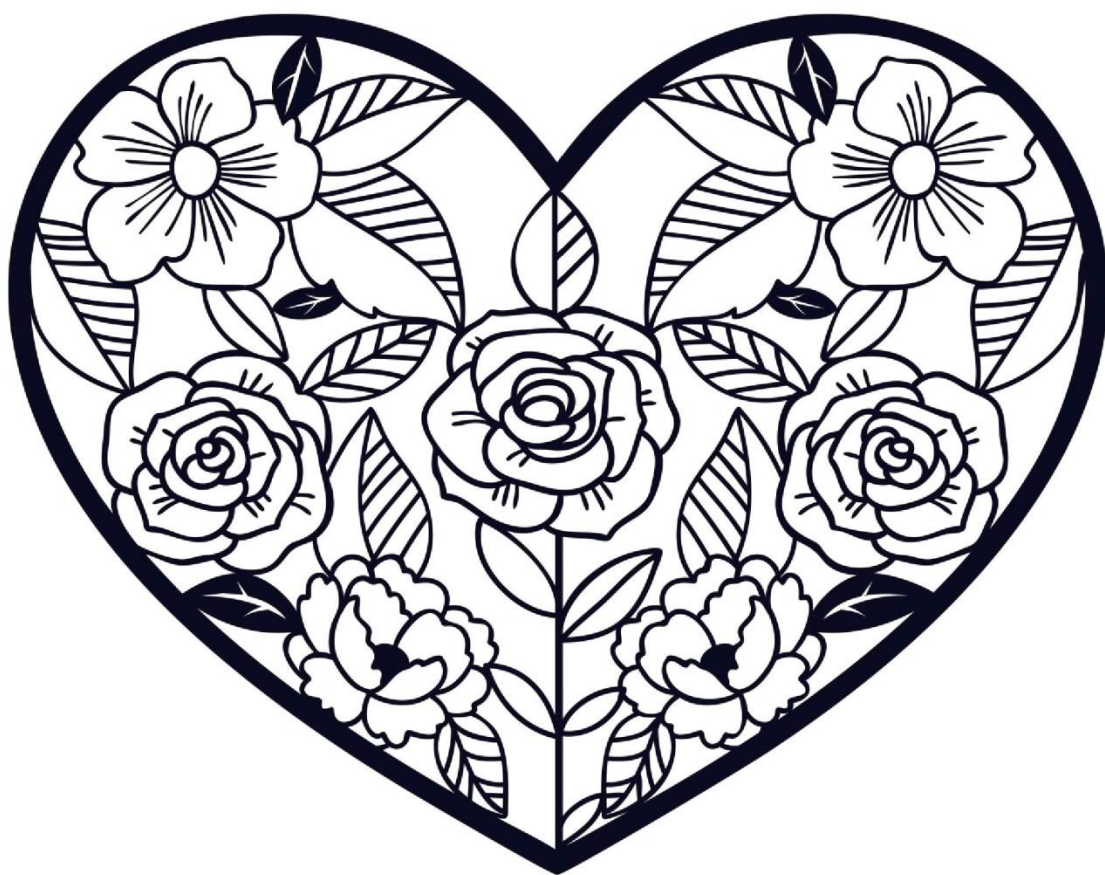
When I feel anxious or stressed, instead of eating I can find ways to relax and reduce the anxious and stressful feelings. More specifically I will.....

To deal with feelings of loneliness, I can...

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompt above.

When I am feeling tired or worn out I need to go to bed earlier and create better boundaries. To do this I will...

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompt above.



SELF-LOVE

*“You are allowed to be both a masterpiece and a work in progress, simultaneously.” –
Sophia Bush*

ADDICTION TO DIETING RESULTING IN SELF-HATRED

We live in a world that's obsessed with how we look. We see people with perfect body and life (neither of them real in most cases) on TV, in magazines, and on social media. All these media sources and in some cases, family members, friends, classmates, and colleagues make us feel that if we have some extra weight it means we are “less than” or we simply don't have willpower.

This starts at a young age and many young girls start crazy, restrictive diets that they read about in gossip magazines. Probably it's something that their favorite celebrity used to lose weight. These fad diets are usually not sustainable and lead to bingeing or overeating after a period of restriction. Then the cycle repeats itself and it might result in years of struggling with food and body image.

Women start to doubt themselves, their self-esteem drops, and the obsession with thinness damages their self-confidence. They may feel ashamed because they don't look like their idolized celebrities or their skinny friends.

They start to wonder if something is actually wrong with them. Clearly, only someone who has something wrong with them can have these eating issues. Also, they feel like they have an awful problem with their eating that they need to hate and attack. So they start to fight themselves, their appetite, their weight, their body fat.

They fight their eating problems and the constant negative self-talk in their head. They hear from themselves over and over that they are not good enough, they always fail, they can't stick to any plan, they are not loveable. They make themselves miserable without any sustainable results to show for it.

Thin misery vs. fat misery, it is still misery.

They expect this approach to work because this is the only way they know.

As Regena Thomashauer, aka “Mama Gena” says: “Today, even still, most of the beauty industry is owned by men and most of the advertising agencies they hire are owned by men and most of the senior creative directors within those advertising agencies are men. And all of these fellas get richer when women feel insecure about their bodies when we believe we’re unlovable as we are when we believe we’d be more worthy if it weren’t for the cellulite or the stretch marks or the grey in our hair. Sisters, it’s a lie of our culture. And I know you know it’s a lie, but when the lie is virtually inescapable, when we let it into our heads and tell it to ourselves in our own voices ... it’s hard to remember what is true.”

Have you been seduced by parts of this approach at some point in your life? I was definitely affected by it. Has it been working for you? Have you been successful with it in the long term? Has it made you happier and more confident in your skin?

I assume it probably hasn’t or you wouldn’t be reading this book right now.

LET YOURSELF ENJOY YOUR FOOD

Hating ourselves into change may work for a while but it never results in true transformation. Nature always wins. When you fight a habit it tends to fight back. What we resist persists.

Food is not the solution to our problems and also not the enemy.

Enjoy your food and eat it with pleasure but remember that cheesecake (or any other food) cannot substitute for the love of another human being or our own self-love.

SELF-LOVE

Deep down you know you’re amazing, beautiful, and talented. The real problem is that you haven’t yet learned how to love and respect yourself as you are.

Most people think that they will be happier, will love their body more, will be more confident and more outgoing when they lose weight. But if they haven't learned to love themselves as they are right now, they will not like themselves at a smaller size either. They will always find something wrong with them, something to be unhappy about. You may have lost the unwanted weight several times, but you always regained it – a very typical story.

“If you don't know how to show yourself kindness when you're a size 18, you won't know how to do it wearing a size 4.” – Unknown

FIND HAPPINESS INSIDE OF YOURSELF

There is a misconception that we can find happiness outside of ourselves, that happiness is waiting for us in the future when we have accomplished certain things.

You might think that your life will be more fun and people will like and love you more when you are at a certain weight. But how can you expect others to love you when you don't love yourself?

If we tie our happiness and self-love to a certain weight or a way that we want to look, we will always chase happiness and give away the inherent power we have to choose happiness and self-love now.

Self-love is your greatest ally. It doesn't mean that you need to accept your unwanted eating habit and never want to change. It means that you start loving you now. There is nothing wrong with you, you are perfectly fine as you are. You just have an unwanted eating habit that you will be able to stop by finding ways to cheerlead, inspire, and uplift yourself to change.

“If you take the road of self-attack you will end up at the end of the road beat up. If you take the road of self-love to change yourself you will ultimately get where you wanna go.”
Mark David

It's time to love your body right now. It's time to receive pleasure now. It's time to be more confident now. It's time to be the real you now.

6 AMAZING BENEFITS OF LEARNING TO LOVE YOURSELF

YOU'LL BE IN CHARGE

Instead of making bad choices because you're being led by shame, guilt, or fear – you will be empowered to make choices that truly make sense for who you are – meaning you will be living your authentic life. You will no longer be caught up with people-pleasing; instead, you will live a life that brings you satisfaction. Self-love means trying to honor yourself because you know your needs are just as important as others.

YOU SET BOUNDARIES & STICK TO THEM

Once you have the hang of honoring your needs you start to feel more confident, which means you are more assertive. Of course, this results in a more purposeful attitude, where you are strong enough to set clear boundaries with people *and* stick to them.

THE APPROVAL SEEKING WILL STOP

When you truly love yourself, you stop worrying about what everyone else thinks about you – which means you're a less defensive person and more confident about living a life that is authentic for

you. Why would you need acceptance from everyone else when you truly accept yourself?

YOU WILL BE A CONSCIOUS DECISION-MAKER

Loving yourself gives you the courage to cut things from your life that don't truly bring you joy or provide you with space to grow. It's easy to make courageous decisions when you value yourself and actively make choices that are intended to honor you, rather than risk harming you.

YOU WILL ENJOY ALONE TIME

A lot of people get caught up in keeping busy schedules simply because they're terrified of feeling or being alone. You surround yourself with people, throw yourself into work, and make decisions that help you avoid that loneliness. Why would you do all of the things that you *don't* love? You could be filling that time with things that you actually enjoy doing –

whether it's meditation, swimming, painting, writing, or watching a movie. It doesn't need to feel scary to spend time alone; there is no reason not to enjoy time with yourself. Self-love brings more comfort when you're spending time in your own company.

YOU WILL FIND HAPPINESS

You don't need to find happiness in relationships, whether they're romantic or not. When you start loving yourself and taking responsibility for your own happiness instead of giving your power away to everyone else, you will naturally feel happier. If you're not in a romantic relationship you will find that you aren't as desperate to be in one as you once were because you know you don't need them. When the right person shows up, you will be ready for that love.

HOW TO START LOVING YOURSELF MORE

Probably you think self-love and pleasure are foolish and a waste of time and effort. Suffering seems more important and valuable and it's much more accepted by everyone.

But to be able to end the struggle with food you will need to start loving and taking better care of yourself even if you don't 'feel' like it. It might be hard work at first, but it's good, necessary, life-enhancing work, and you're worthy of it.

Start with baby steps.

SLOW DOWN WITH FOOD

Eat with pleasure and appreciation (see chapter Mindful Eating).

START GETTING SOME SENSORY PLEASURES.

Your body is an amazing pleasure machine. (And I'm not just talking about sex.) However, we often don't even notice it because we spend most of the time in our head and not in our body. Start to spend more time in your body and enjoy the pleasures it can provide you every day. Use all your five senses (if you can).

List something you could do that would give you pleasure using your senses.

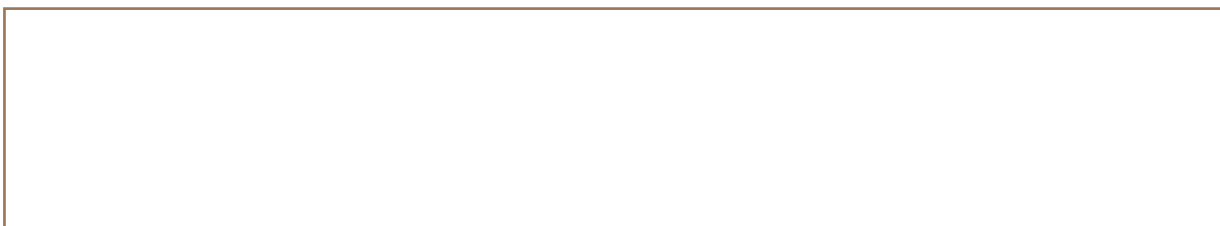
Taste: (E.g. melt a piece of chocolate on your tongue, eat a juicy fruit, drink a cup of delicious coffee or tea)

Smell: (e.g. cinnamon, your favorite perfume, fresh herbs, flowers, essential oils)

Listen: (e.g. your favorite songs, children laughing, [uplifting podcasts](#), audiobooks)

See: (e.g. a beautiful painting, the trees and birds outside, the stars and the moon, photos of people you love, photos of beautiful flowers or dresses, a walk in nature)

Touch: (e.g. body lotion or shower gel on your skin, the wind in your hair, a massage, cuddle your child, loved one or pet, kisses, and other pleasurable touches)



Experience some of these pleasures every day. Pamper yourself more. Show your body some love.

TRY THE LOVING BLANKET EXERCISE

Close your eyes and imagine that someone who loves you (it can be you) puts a huge blanket of love around you. You don't need to see the person or know who it is. Feel the love flowing into your body, filling you up with love. Stay with this image and feeling as long as you can or want to.

TREAT YOURSELF.

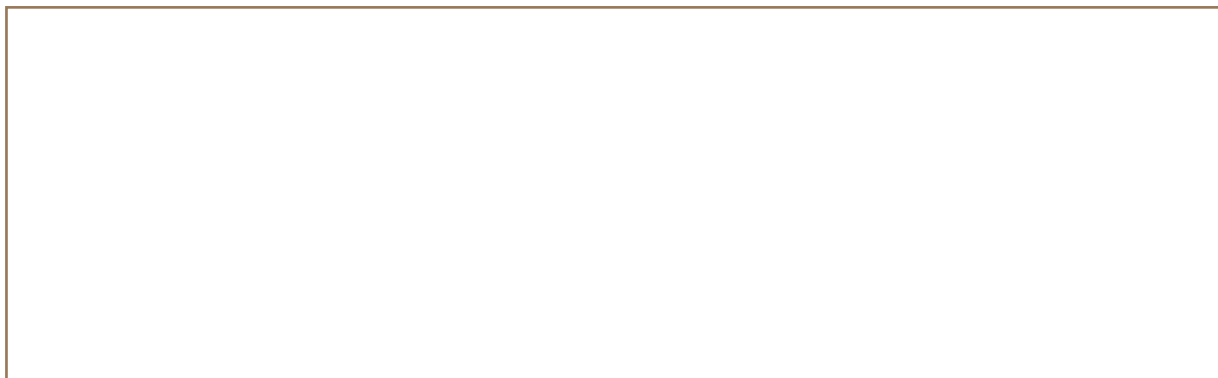
Buy some new clothes, flowers or something else you enjoy (not food).

ACKNOWLEDGE AND FEEL YOUR FEELINGS INSTEAD OF EATING THEM

We have been taught to suppress our feelings. Especially women. If a man is angry he is simply angry. If a woman is angry, she is a "bitch" or "hysterical". When a man is sad, he is just sad. When a woman is sad, she is "being emotional" and "hormonal".

Most women are not even aware of how often they swallow their emotions until they are forced to not do it anymore. So I want you to regularly check in with yourself.

What are you feeling now? What do you feel most often? Worried, sad, surprized, amused, tired, annoyed, loving, lonely, resentful, insecure, joyful, happy, hurt, helpless, jealous, glad, calm, excited, suspicious, angry, relieved, depleted, safe, comfortable, radiant, resentful, guarded, aroused, depressed?



Several times a day check in with your feelings and **say to yourself: I feel, and that's ok.**

It may feel silly and awkward at first, but this acknowledgment of your feelings will really help you quiet your self-critic, and help you stop suppressing your feelings with food. As an added bonus, it's easy to practice anywhere and anytime.

If you fight your feelings you make them stronger. Here's a good metaphor from Brook Castillo that sums this up nicely: imagine your feelings like someone coming to your house to break in. If you don't expect them, they sneak in through the back door. If you still pretend they aren't there, they will cause harm. But if you are expecting them, sitting calmly on the sofa with policemen, you can let them in and peacefully watch them leaving with the policemen.

So sit with your uncomfortable feelings without fighting or "eating" them. Most of the time they pass in a few minutes, just like clouds moving across the sky. Your feelings can't harm you. Even the worst feelings are only feelings, nothing more.

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE

Surround yourself with people who see the good in you. Remove the people from your life who criticize and discourage you.

The people we spend time with really affect us. Especially when you in the process of learning to love yourself, you don't want people in your life who constantly criticize, discourage, or make fun of you or bring you down with their own body issues and self-hatred.

It's important to surround yourself with people who appreciate your strengths and accept your weaknesses.

If someone negatively affects you, politely thank them for their relationship and ask them if you can take a break from each other and not meet until you make some changes in your life. I know it's not always possible, for example, if this person is your boss or someone you financially depend on, but you can always look for ways to spend as little time with them as possible.

Build a team of supportive friends and colleagues, or have a coach who will support you, so you have someone to turn to when you would usually turn to food.

PRAISE YOURSELF

The truth is you are beautiful. Think of a woman you love. Think of her face, her eyes, her smile, her body. She probably doesn't look like a model in the magazines or on Instagram (even models don't look like that all the time) but you still love her and you find her beautiful. If she loves you too, I bet she also finds you beautiful.

"Kindness makes you the most beautiful person in the world no matter what you look like." – Unknown

So praise yourself often. Tell yourself you are beautiful and loveable. Compliment yourself.

Write down 10 things you love about yourself and why

Things I love about myself	
1.	
2.	
3.	

4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Say to yourself: I love my body; it keeps me healthy and strong.

WRITE A LOVE LETTER TO YOURSELF.

Write it as you would write to someone you love, appreciatively, and ask for forgiveness for how you treated her in the past.

EXERCISE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY, AND NOT TO LOSE WEIGHT OR PUNISH YOURSELF FOR EATING TOO MUCH

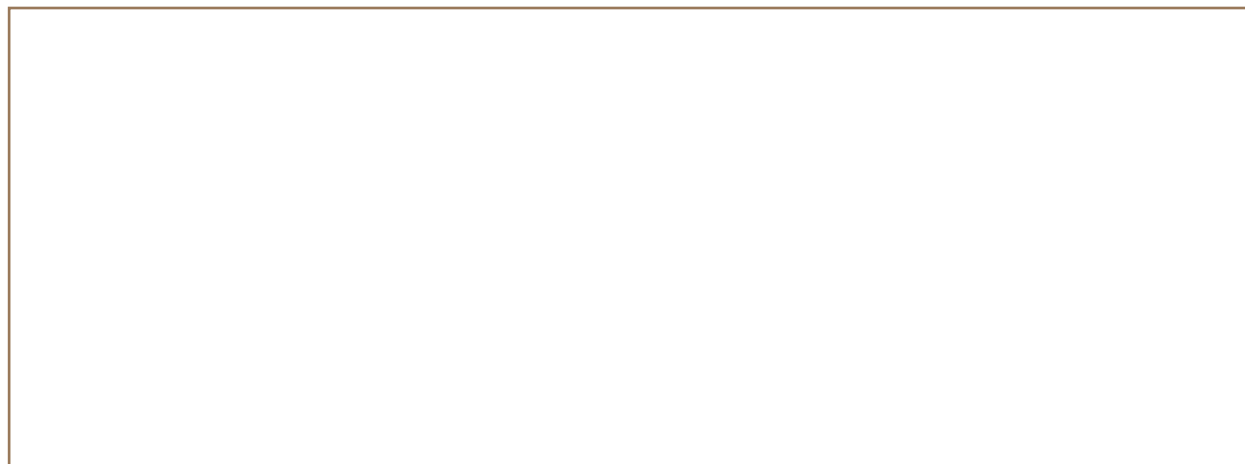
Give up exercise machines or gruelling exercise routines if you don't enjoy them. Instead take the dance class you've always wanted to or go for a bike ride. Or put on your favorite music and dance in your living room or your kitchen. Close your eyes, lose yourself in the song, and move your body how it wants to move.

Go for a hike, try scuba-diving, salsa dancing, swimming, skating, or just simply go for a walk. Do whatever you feel like doing. If you try new things be prepared to suck at it at the beginning. Everyone sucks at things they do the first time. Don't compare yourself to others.

Don't treat exercise as something that makes you thin because if you don't get slim you will think that exercise is pointless and you will stop doing it. Don't expect anything from it, just do it as a way of caring for your body. Exercising may become your favorite "date with yourself". You may discover some new music or a podcast you like listening to while exercising. You will enjoy becoming stronger and having more stamina, better posture, and a calmer mind.

Weight-loss should be the by-product of exercising, not the goal.

Which exercise are you going to do, how many times a week? Set a minimum baseline exercise that you will do no matter what. It could be just a 10-minute walk 3 times a week, it doesn't need to be something ambitious. Make it a realistic plan that you can definitely do and then do it. You can always do more if you want to but set a minimum baseline. The



purpose of this is to learn to be disciplined and keep your promises. Keeping your promises will increase your self-esteem.

CHANGE YOUR NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

“Talk to yourself like you would to someone you love.” Brene Brown

You are stuck with yourself for the rest of your life. Is it a good thought? Are you good company? Are you nice to yourself?

Your negative inner critic can really undermine your self-esteem and it can lead to low confidence, anxiety, self-sabotage, emotional eating, and even depression. If you want to stop emotional eating, it is especially important to get rid of your negative thoughts since they can make it really hard or even impossible to achieve your goal. In fact, when you start to crave unhealthy habits, most of the time it is a sign of your inner critic's actions.

TALK TO YOURSELF LIKE YOU WOULD TO SOMEONE YOU LOVE

If we talked with our friends the way we talk to ourselves sometimes, we probably wouldn't have any friends. Try looking at yourself from the outside, as if you were one of your friends or a child and motivate, encourage, help, and most importantly love that person (yourself).

If a friend or child of yours wanted to lose weight, you wouldn't tell her/him that “Look at your huge belly! You will never be able to get rid of it. Why would you even try, eat this cake instead!” Would you? (I hope not :-))

When you find yourself saying negative, mean things to yourself, stop, and let yourself know that this kind of behavior is not acceptable.

You can dislike what you did and still love yourself. Look at yourself from the outside and you will understand better why you did what you did.

HUMMING AND GIBBERISH

Brial Alman, one of the world's leading mind-body stress experts, suggests that when the chatter in your head is too loud try humming or speaking gibberish. Take a deep breath and as you breathe out, hum all the way to the end of your breath. Feel your own vibration. The longer you can hum, the faster you will quiet your mind. Do this for about a minute, or for about twenty breaths. Hum louder than your thoughts.

Another great way to quiet your mind is speaking gibberish. You've spoken it before when you were a baby. It came naturally to you before you learned to speak and it calmed you and made you feel good. It still works the same way. Make up your own gibberish language and speak it for one or two minutes when you want to quiet your mind. It may sound crazy, but this is a playful, creative, funny, and relaxing activity that you will probably enjoy if you give it a chance.

LIVE IN THE PRESENT

Your negative thoughts are often related to the past or the future. You are dwelling on something that happened in the past or you are worried about the future.

Live in the present, not in your head!

Don't dwell on the past, you can't change it anyway. Give your best in the present, pay attention to your present feelings, and learn from them. Then you won't need to worry about the future. Look at yourself again from the outside and try to figure out what initiated the negative thoughts. Develop your own strategies for avoiding these situations in the future.

Remember, you start with a clean sheet every day.

TREAT YOUR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AS UNWANTED GUESTS

Your negative thoughts are just unwanted guests in your head, so don't make a big deal out of them. You will just make them stronger. Let them come and go, as I said about your feelings. **Don't fight them; try to accept them without criticism.**

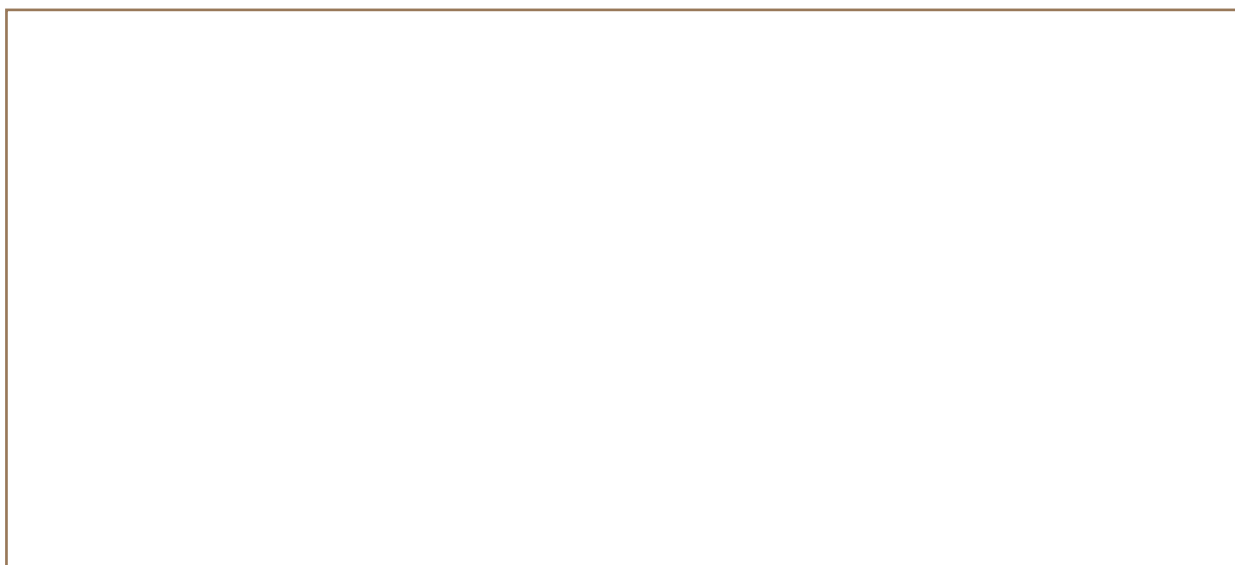
Imagine your unwanted negative thoughts as fluffy clouds flying across the clear blue sky.

Then send a positive thought after them!

“I could overeat/binge whenever I want to but I choose not to. I choose to be healthy and fit.” “Everything is available for me, including an ideal body.” “I’m confident and I look confident.” “Failure doesn’t exist. I either win or learn.” “I deserve to be healthy, happy, and successful.”

Remember that you are what you think about yourself.

Think about the negative thoughts you regularly think about yourself. Now write a positive thought after them that you are going to use whenever the negative thoughts pop up in your head.



MEDITATE

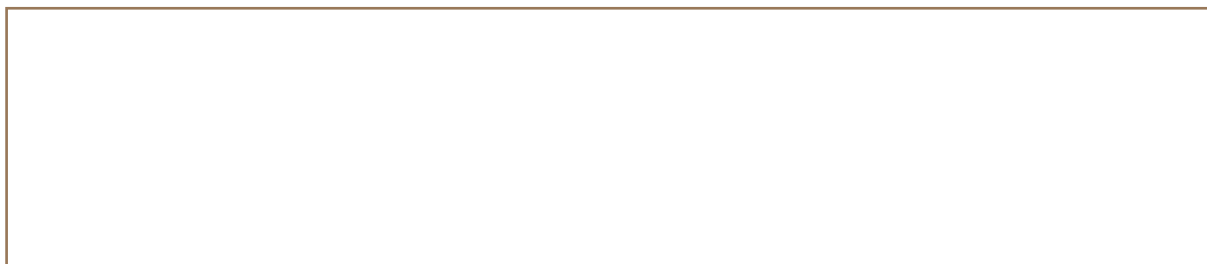
Meditation is so beneficial for us. If your brain can’t calm down in the evening and at 3 am you are still awake and thinking about what you or someone else said 5 years ago, or wondering how your child will manage in school when he’s still a baby – listen to some guided meditations. They will quiet your mind.

As you begin to regularly practice meditation, the effects will become stronger and your ability to achieve a sense of calm and go to your “clear blue sky state” will become easier. The most advanced meditators can actually go into their mind and find calm amidst in the most stressful and chaotic environments.

Much like riding a bike or learning a sport, you have to devote necessary time to the practice of meditation in order to get the most benefits from the practice.

Meditations will also help you stop emotional eating because a calm mind can deal with emotions much better than a stressed mind.

Choose a few meditations that you are going to try. Try mediation apps like Calm or Headspace or have a look on YouTube.

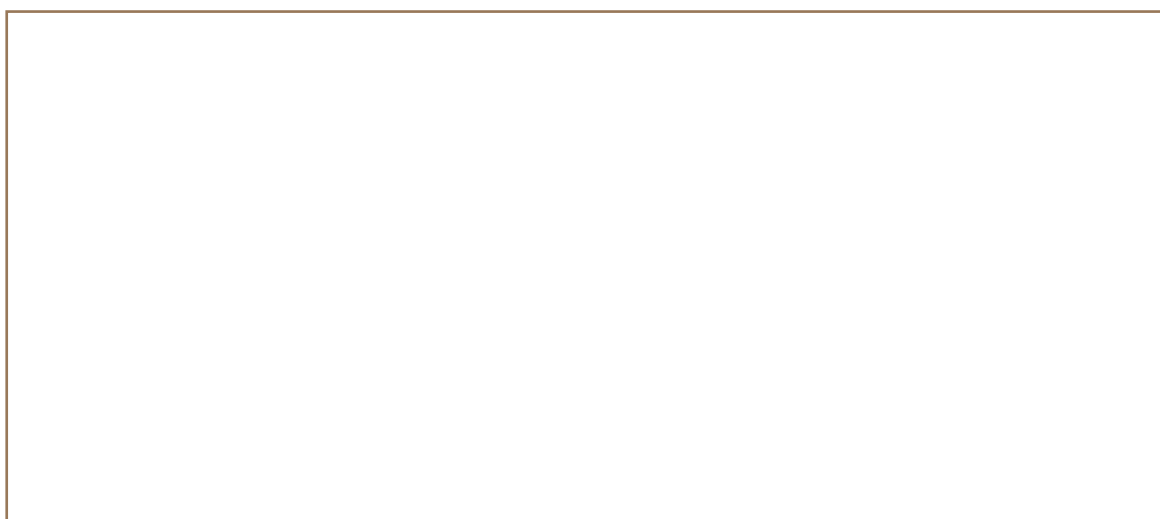


DO DIFFICULT THINGS

When things come easy to us, we don't feel as proud as when they are more difficult.

When you acknowledge that something is difficult and you don't feel like doing it but then you do it anyway, you make yourself proud. Self-pride must be earned, cannot be taken away and tastes better than any food. It's a good way to build your self-confidence and self-love. Find your strengths and use them.

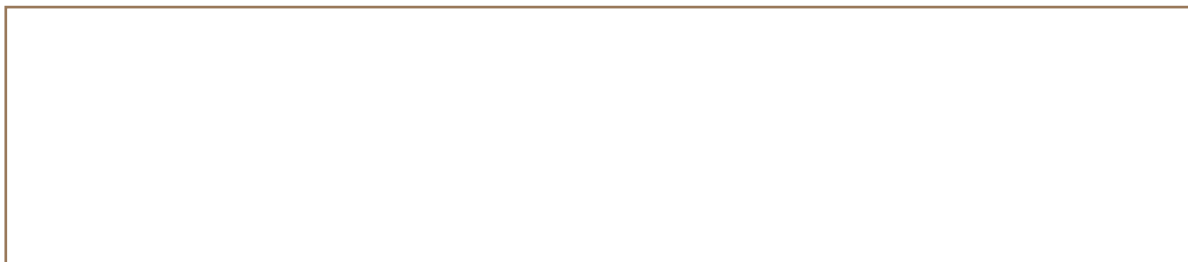
What are your strengths?



FIND YOUR PASSION AND PURPOSE

If you don't know how to do it, try [this guide](#). You are born with a special talent or skill that you are really good at and love doing. You just need to find it inside of you. It might be really easy and obvious for some (musicians, writers, painters, and other artists). Some talents and skills are not so straightforward, like helping people, being a good mother, or providing for the family.

Your purpose is your reason for living. I give you three methods [in the guide](#) to discover the purpose of your life.



One of the biggest challenges we have in loving ourselves is our natural desire to make others happy. But too often you will neglect yourself in the process.

To make sure that you don't forget about yourself schedule the activities that help you care for yourself. As you start doing these activities, after a while they become a routine. You'll create a balance between loving others and loving yourself.

What activities will you try first to start loving yourself more? When and how often are you going to practice them? Put them into your calendar. Reward yourself if you stick to them. Then try some new ones.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin brown border, intended for the user to write down their activities and schedule.

You might want to read [this article](#) from Sarah Siders too, I really enjoyed it and related to it.

I'm so excited that you are starting to love yourself more and more every day. It will truly change your life. Let's do this!



CREATE YOUR IDENTITY

YOUR SELF-IMAGE CREATES YOUR LIFE

It took me a while to realize that the real key to gaining back our ability to eat normally again is not setting S.M.A.R.T. goals, or following a diet or exercise plan.

The key is: changing your self-image.

Your self-image is how you identify yourself, how you see yourself, and your thoughts about yourself.

“You can never outperform your own self-image” - Maxwell Maltz

If you identify yourself as a woman with eating issues, you will struggle with eating issues.

If you identify yourself as a woman with weight problems, you will have weight problems.

If you identify yourself as a woman with financial issues, you will have financial issues.

If you identify yourself as someone with relationship issues, you will have relationship issues.

And so on.

You cannot extend outside the barriers of your self-image because you immediately self-sabotage yourself to get back into the “box” you created for yourself.

Your self-image is like a thermostat. It keeps you in the range you can identify yourself with.

When I struggled with my weight, I saw myself as a girl with a weight problem (that’s what I saw from most of my female relatives; women struggling with their weight was normal for me).

Later on, when I changed my self-image to being a naturally slim woman, the struggle ended.

How you see yourself is determining your whole life.

Your self-image affects every aspect of your life — how you think about yourself, how you see yourself, how you interact with others, how others treat you, the foods you choose, the exercise you do, the work you do, the people you spend time with, the people you love, the clothes you wear, the amount of fun and joy you have in your life, the opportunities you take. Basically everything!

ELEVATE YOUR SELF-IMAGE, RAISE YOUR STANDARDS

By elevating your self-image you will be able to get where you want to be.

Every thought you think is shaping your identity.

You can decide who you are.

You can decide what you think of yourself.

You can decide what you believe.

Are you deciding on purpose?

Do you decide how you show up? What small daily choices you make? Do you choose the thoughts you think?

Or is it all a default setting?

If you want to live a different life, you have to become a different person.

Your self-image is either holding you back or driving you forward into the life you would love to have.

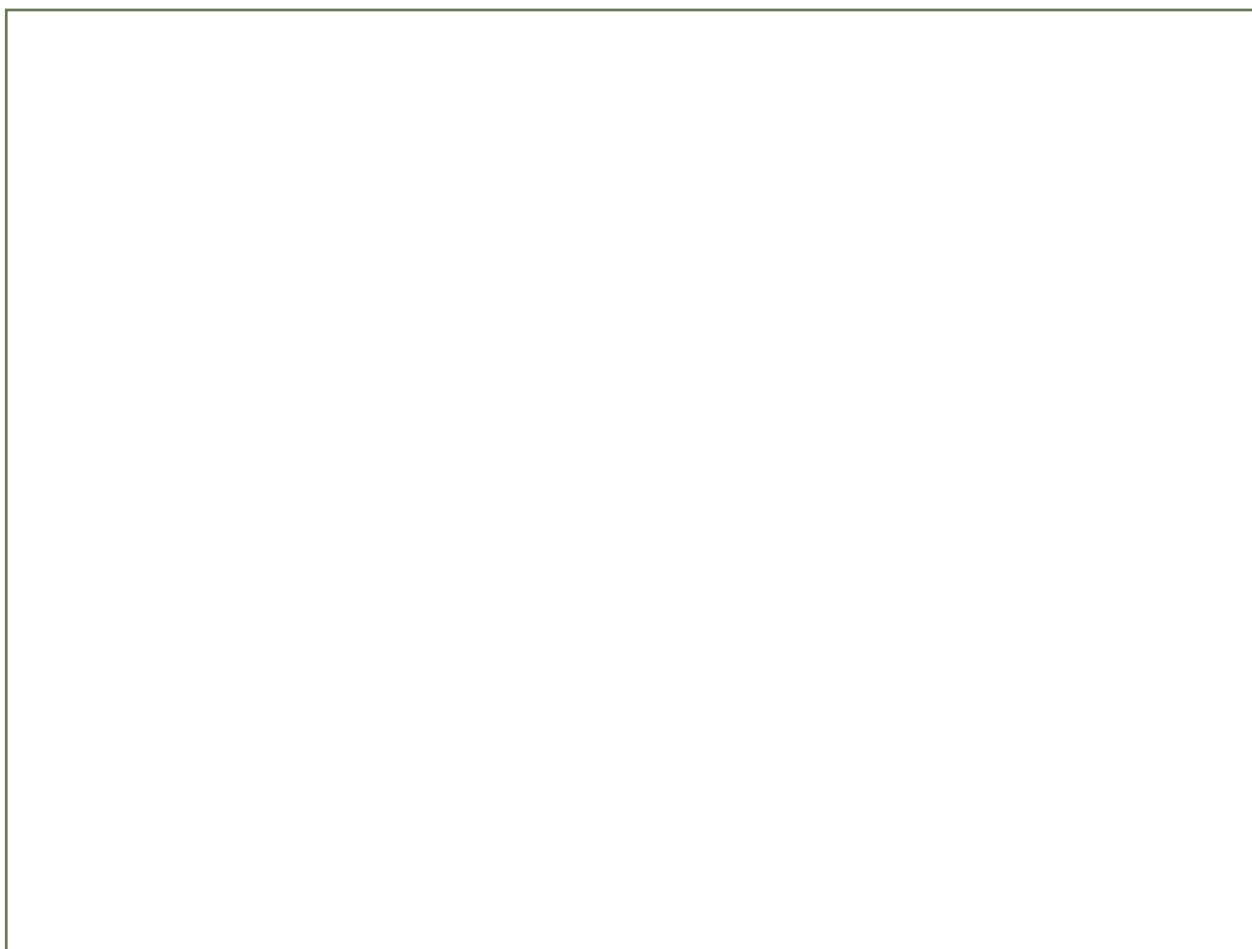
Use your imagination to dream up the woman you want to be and become her

Imagine that one morning you wake up and you suddenly realize that your Fairy Godmother visited you at night and turned you into the future YOU that you want to become (maybe a natural eater, a healthy, fit you).

How would you know that this happened? What would be the first thing you notice that's different? Ask yourself: what would she do, how would she feel? If she looks in the mirror what would she see? How would she spend the day? How would she behave in certain

situations, what would her daily habits be, what would she eat, what would she wear, who would she spend time with, what would she do for fun, how would she communicate with others, how would others treat her, what standards and boundaries would she have, what would her job be, where would she live? Imagine her in great detail!

Write about this future you:



Your future self has all the answers.

So when you are faced with a problem or a decision, ask yourself: What would the natural eater, healthy, fit, future me do in this situation? For example, would she eat the whole packet of chips or would she only have a few and then do something else, or maybe she wouldn't have any if she didn't feel like it.

Remember, your future self would be consistent. For example, don't imagine that she will never eat any 'treats' because that's not sustainable. She will, but she will be able to eat those treats in moderation and enjoy every bite.

Try “Future self meditation”.

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS AND THOUGHTS WISELY

You can CHOOSE to become your future self RIGHT NOW! It really is a choice. It's an attitude and a personal standard.

We usually think that when we have achieved something, we will feel a certain way. But it's the other way round. The truth is that when you feel a certain way, you will achieve the thing you are aiming for.

Here is something very important to understand:

- When we are in a certain situation we have thoughts about it.
- These thoughts create feelings and emotions.
- Our feelings make us do things; they drive our actions.
- Our actions have outcomes that affect the situation we are in, i.e. they change the situation.
- Now we have a new situation, and we have thoughts about it. And so the cycle starts again.

From this, you can see that if you want to change your situation in the desired direction (stopping overeating) your thoughts and words you regularly use has a tremendous effect on your success.

I DON'T VS. I CAN'T

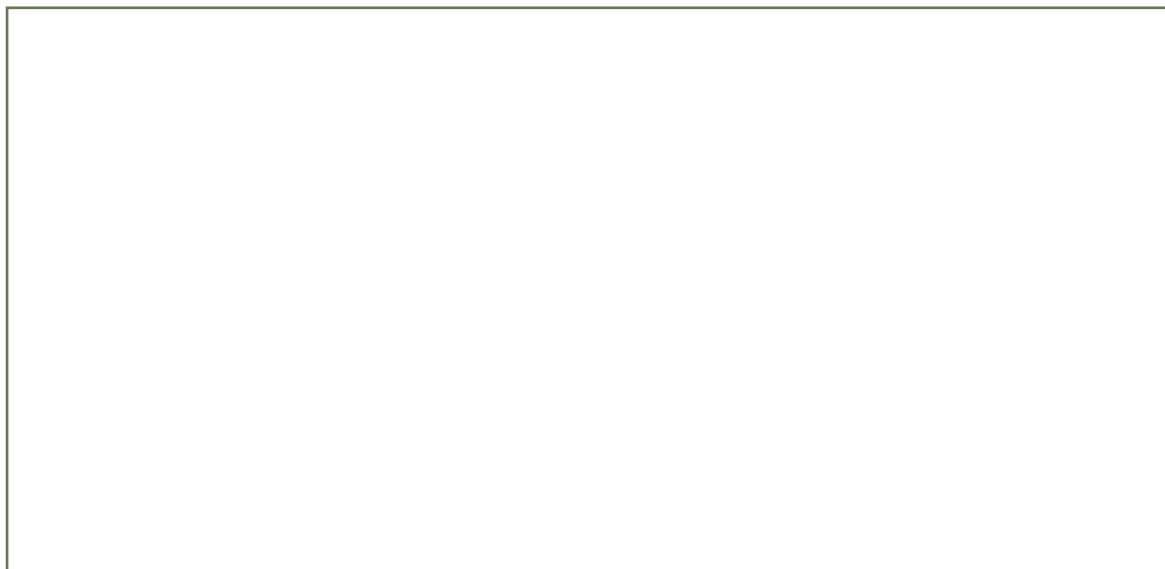
It's very powerful to think or say: *I don't do that* instead of *I can't do that*.

Look at this research study for example: 80% of the women who used the words “I don't eat that” (as their identity, i.e. they are someone who doesn't eat that) when they were faced with a treat that they would've rather skipped, were able to stick to their healthy eating habits. In comparison, only 10% didn't eat the treat if they told themselves “I can't eat that”.

“I can’t” represents deprivation, scarcity, giving up something you desire, while “I don’t” gives you a sense of empowerment. I’m a person with a high standard who doesn’t do that; this is my new identity. I could if wanted to, but I choose not to. It’s my decision, not an external force making me do it.

It’s similar to how vegetarians and vegans think about not eating meat. They don’t tell themselves that they can’t eat meat; instead they say “I don’t eat meat”. It’s their decision, and nobody is forcing them.

Write down the sentences you regularly use containing *I can’t* and then rewrite them using *I don’t*.



Maybe saying *I don’t* can feel too difficult at the beginning. Start with saying *I used to*.

Let me show you how.

I USED TO DO THAT

As I said before, the thoughts we think about ourselves create our self-image and our reality.

Maybe you identify yourself with any of the following:

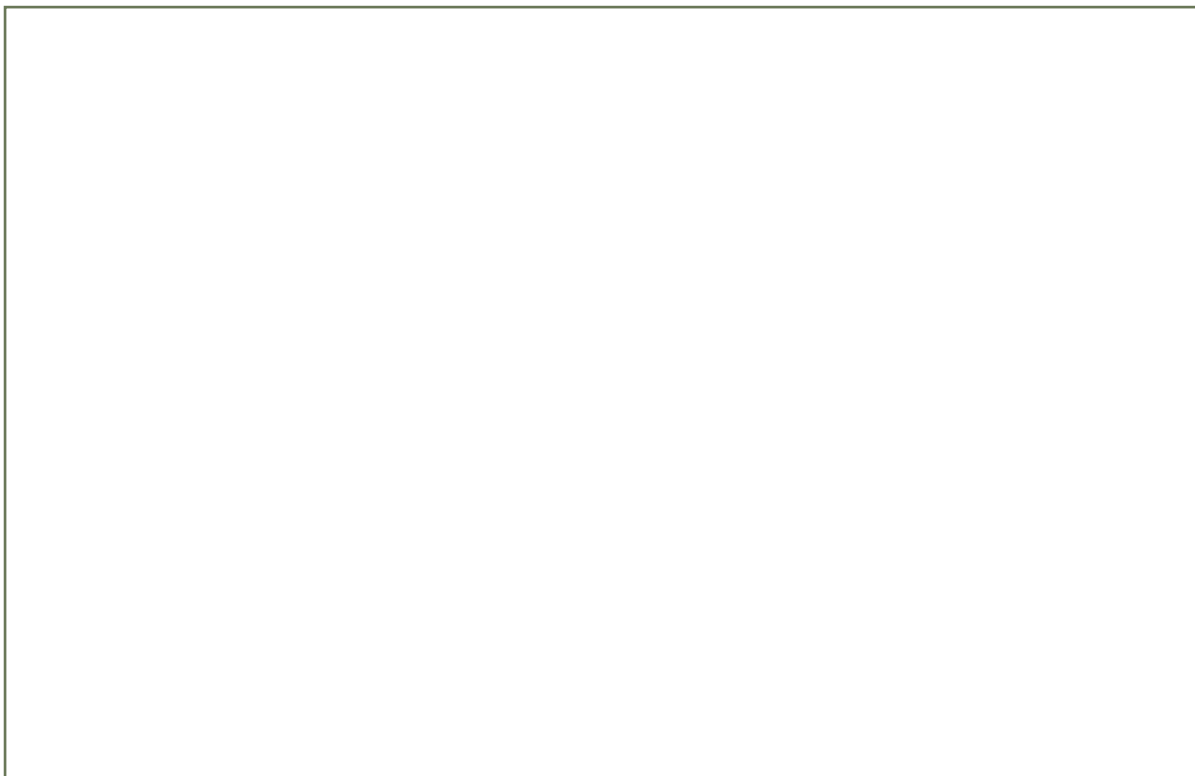
- “When I have an argument with someone I always have the urge to eat.”

- “When I prepare for an important presentation or exam or interview I eat a packet of cookies/bag of chips.”
- “When my kids get on my nerves I need to eat to calm down.”
- “Before (or during) my period I always gain 2 kilos” (this one was a very sticky thought for me)
- “When I get home from work I’m so exhausted and hungry I crave fast food.”
- “As soon as I put the kids to bed and finally sit down I start to crave chocolate/wine.”

When you say these things, you identify yourself with these statements. How to change this? Start to use the past tense and “fake it till you make it”. When you have your usual thoughts start changing them to:

- “When I had an argument with someone I used to have the urge to eat.”
- “When I prepared for an important presentation or exam or interview I used to eat a packet of cookies/bag of chips.”
- “When my kids got on my nerves I used to eat to calm down.”
- “Before (or during) my period I used to gain 2 kilos.
- “When I get home from work I’m so exhausted and hungry I used to crave fast food, now I crave my quick and easy homemade healthy food.”
- “As soon as I put the kids to bed and had a chance to finally sit down I used to crave chocolate/wine.”

Write down the sentences you regularly think or say about yourself in connection with your eating habits and rewrite them using the past tense and the words *I used to*.



I SHOULD VS. I COULD

Replace the words *I should* with *I could*.

What happens when I tell you that you shouldn't think about a sweet, creamy, delicious chocolate cake? You immediately imagine the cake, right?

What happens when you tell a small child that they shouldn't do something? Of course, they rebel and they do it.

It is our natural instinct. Saying to ourselves that we shouldn't do something has the opposite effect.

Try using could instead.

For example:

Instead of saying I shouldn't eat this slice of chocolate cake, try: I could eat this slice of chocolate cake – do I really want it, will it make me feel good?

If the answer is: "No, I'm full and feel satisfied, today I don't need this chocolate cake", that's great, find another activity to do.

If the answer is: "Yes, it would really make me feel good right now, I would really enjoy this slice of chocolate cake", eat it. It's ok.

If you denied yourself when you really wanted that 'treat food', maybe later you would have eaten the whole cake instead of only one slice.

Eat 'treat foods' in moderation when you are in a good mood too so you don't associate these foods with only bad emotions.

As you practice this you will find that you will say no more and more often. The foods you restricted before won't be as appealing and exciting anymore once they are allowed any time you want them.

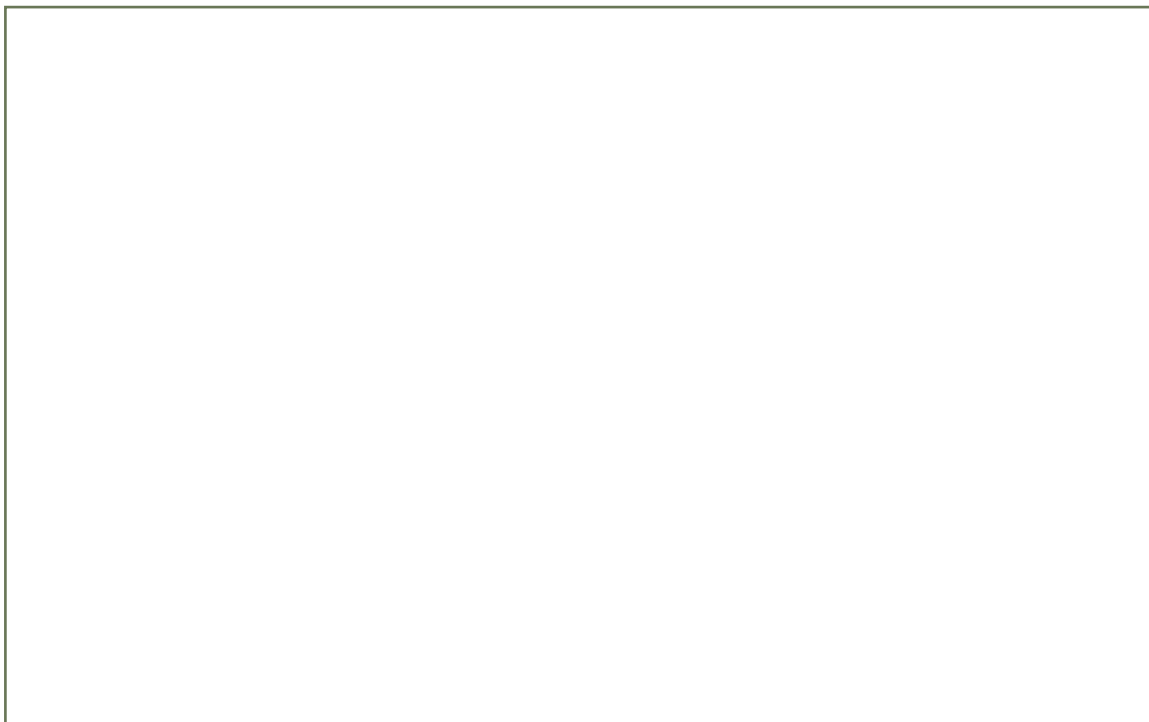
Write down the sentences you use containing *I should* and rewrite them using *I could*.

A large empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write down sentences containing 'I should' and rewrite them using 'I could'.

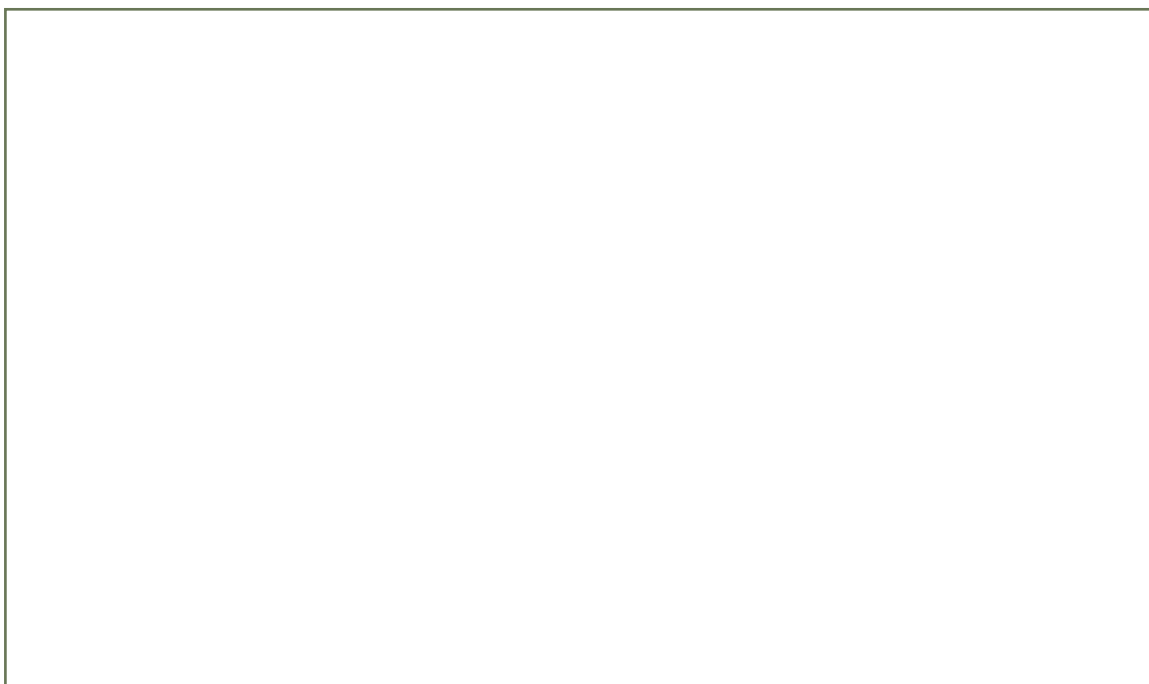
Changing your words and thoughts this way will have a tremendous effect on your eating habits but it won't happen overnight. Keep practicing as long as you need to. After a while, you will start to feel the change in your identity and in your actions too.

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR IDENTITY

Now let's get a bit more philosophical. Take a deep breath, relax, and think about the question: Who am I? Try to answer it: I am...



If you looked yourself up in Wikipedia what would it say about you? Who are you?



Now take a few minutes to really appreciate who you are and feel the emotions that come up. If you feel negative emotions I want you to know that this is the identity that you created for yourself and you have the power to change it too.

If you want to change this identity, make a list of all the desired attributes of your new identity, your new self-image. Get excited like a child about your new you and consciously decide who you want to be. Get inspiration from the exercise at the beginning when you imagined that you woke up as your ideal self. Use [“Future self meditation”](#).

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write down their desired attributes and self-image.

Develop a plan of actions that you would take to be in alignment with your new self-image. What will you do tomorrow? Next week? Next month? Next year? Remember, your actions are driven by your thoughts and emotions and you can create your new reality.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write down their plan of actions.

Don't worry if you can't come up with a plan yet. Your subconscious mind will send you messages to do certain things as you slowly (or quickly) change your self-image. Listen to this positive voice and act on these inspirations. When you hear yourself saying *I couldn't do that* or *That's just not me* as a response to these inspiring messages think about the consequences of these thoughts. Do you limit your self-image with these words? If so, get yourself to take action and do those things that you think you can't. When you do these activities, you prove to yourself that you can do hard things and you improve your self-esteem. You expand your identity and you break the barriers of your previous self-image. You prove that you are your future self and you will get there quicker.

I'm here to cheer for you and support you all the way there. Go girl, you deserve it!

DREAM
MORE

STRONG INNER MOTIVATION

“Whether you think you can or you can’t, you’re probably right.” Henry Ford

Our neural pathways are similar to an incredibly complex highway. Between the 10 billion nerve cells the communication never stops.

The main tasks of our brains are keeping us alive, avoiding pain and gaining pleasure. It constantly protects us from potential danger and seeks pleasure.

When you know you should do something, why don't you do it? Because at some level you believe taking action at this moment would be more painful than just putting it off.

For example, you concentrate on the short term pleasure (overeating) instead of the long term pleasure (having a healthy, fit body). This way you will have long term pain (weight gain).

If you are willing to have pain for the short term (stopping before you emotionally eat and observing your thoughts and feelings), you will be rewarded with pleasure in the long term (a healthy, fit body).

As I said earlier, if we often repeat an activity, emotion, or behavior (overeating, bingeing, smoking, drinking, procrastinating, swearing, shouting, etc.), the responsible neural pathway becomes stronger and thicker and a habit forms. These neural pathways will be the highways in our brains. These are real physical changes in the brain, and the more we engage in these activities and behaviors, the more likely that we will do them again in the future.

But there is a way out! If we can stop ourselves from engaging in these behavioral patterns long enough, the strong neural pathways become weaker and weaker, and consequently, the habit will disappear.

DECIDE WHAT YOU REALLY WANT

Our intention sets our direction.

Make setting your intention part of your daily ritual. Because if you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there.

We tend to focus on what we *don't want* to happen. You need to learn to concentrate on what you *do* want!

We make what we focus on stronger. When we think about something often, we strengthen those neural pathways in our brain.

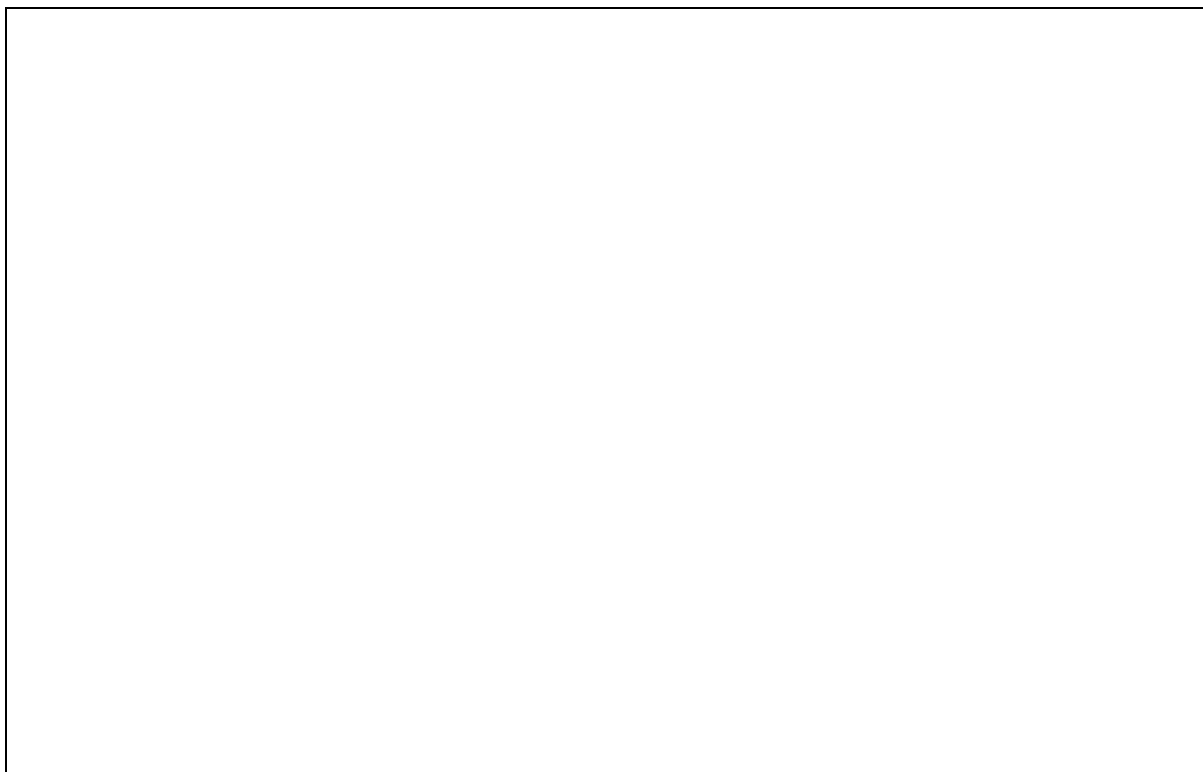
So, what do you want?

What do you truly desire?

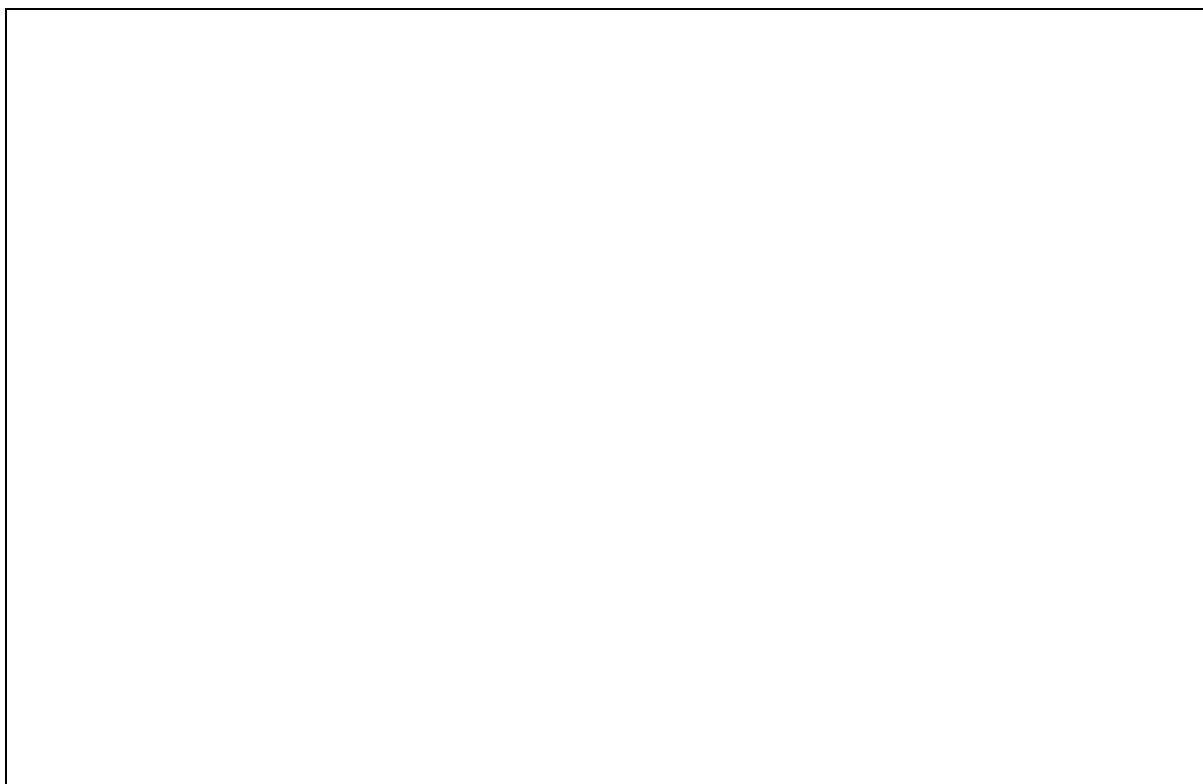
How do you want to feel when you get there?

Dig deep. Why do you want to feel that way?

How will it affect your life, your relationships, your health, your career, your intimate relationships?



Now think about **what stops you from getting what you want:**



THE PAIN AND PLEASURE TWINS

The brain likes what it is used to and doesn't like unusual situations because it might be dangerous. Therefore, we often stay in unpleasant or even horrible circumstances, because our brain wants to protect us from a potentially dangerous unusual situation.

You might hate your boss and dread going to work every morning, but you stay in that position because you have got used to this unpleasant status. What if you change jobs and your next boss is even worse? Or you stay in an unhappy relationship because if you break up, you may not find anyone else. You think it is still better than loneliness.

You overeat/binge because it's easier than saying no to your urge to eat and facing your feelings.

To start any change in your life you need to reach a pain threshold, where your brain tells you: "I can't stand this anymore, it's unbearable, do something!" You need to associate this state with not achieving your goal; you need to trigger such pain.

Then you need to associate positive feelings, emotions, happiness, pleasure, contentment with achieving your goal. I've listed a few examples below but try to come up with your own associations based on your personal experiences.

Pain can be associated with not being able to eat normally, not being able to enjoy social situations without thinking about food instead of your company, having to hide how much you eat, feeling out of control, feeling like a monster took over your body, wasting money on food your body doesn't need, not being able to deal with your emotions without eating, feeling like a failure over and over again.

Imagine how you feel when you need to wear clothes that hide some parts of your body and not the clothes you would like to. Not being able to perform confidently at an important event (such as a business meeting, presentation, job interview, or social event). Not being able to go out and dance, enjoy yourself carelessly. Not being able to run around with your children, grandchildren.

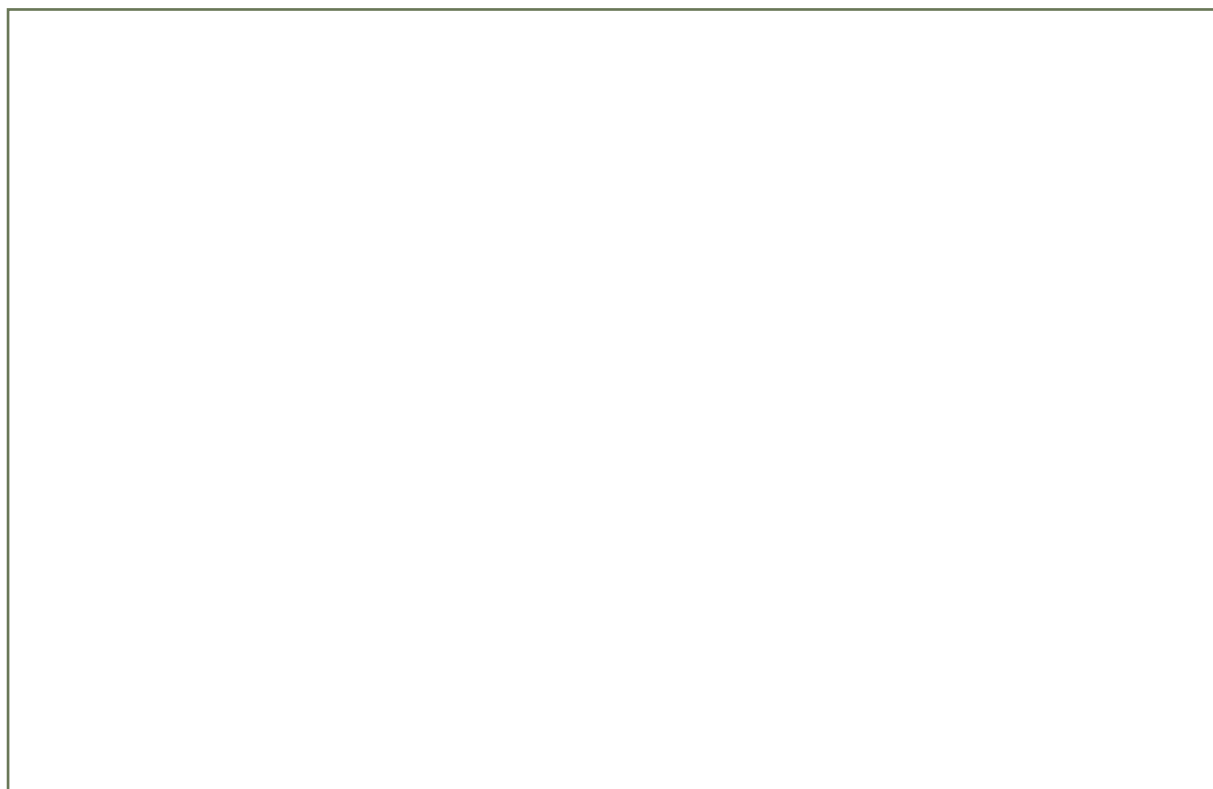
Positive associations can be the feeling when you eat normally again. You have mastered your overeating issues and now you feel free and have more time to concentrate on the joyful things in your life. You can allow your light to shine again. You feel confident and unstoppable. You enjoy eating without feeling guilty and you know how not to overdo it or eat mindlessly in a fog. You are able to tell when you are hungry, satisfied, and full, instead of eating until you are almost sick every time you eat. You can eat a piece of chocolate without having to finish the whole bar. Imagine that feeling of freedom.

Imagine the emotions you feel when you can choose any clothes you want. The feeling of being able to carelessly dance, run, exercise. The feeling of being energetic. You can walk confidently across the beach, your crush notices you, you can confidently perform at that important event.

HOW TO HAVE STRONG INTERNAL MOTIVATION

STEP 1

First, decide on the change you want to make. Use positive words.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to Step 1.

STEP 2

List the pains and pleasures associated with change:

PAINS ASSOCIATED WITH NO CHANGE

What will it cost me if I don't change, what are the pains associated with not taking this action? List the things you *don't* want.

PLEASURES ASSOCIATED TO CHANGE

What pleasures will I gain if I change now? What are my positive associations? What do I want?

HIDDEN COSTS AND BENEFITS OF NOT CHANGING

Although you want to end your struggle with emotional eating, overeating, or binge eating, and you want better relationship with food and your body, there are always some hidden benefits and costs of doing so.

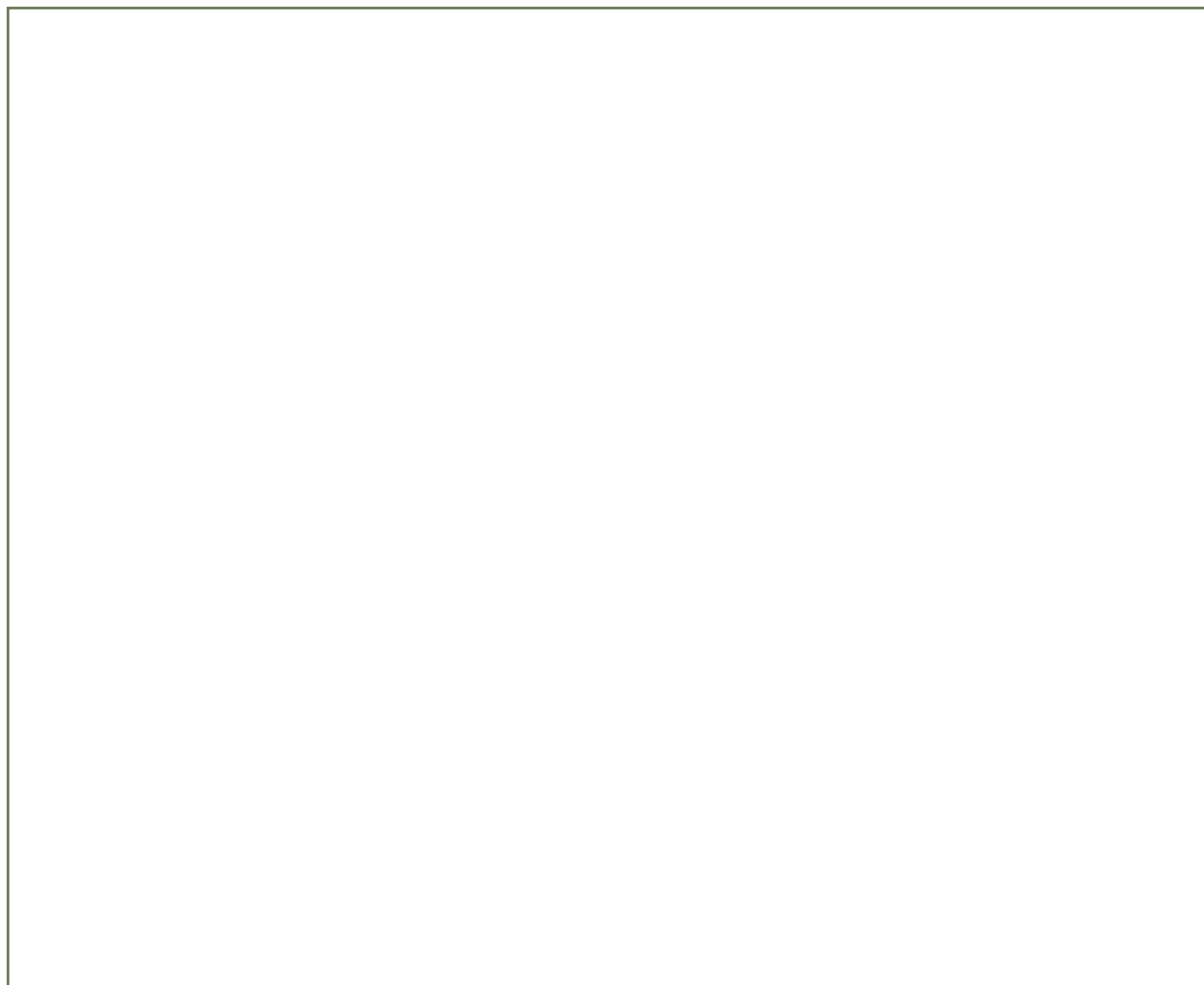
You know there are massive benefits to giving up eating your feelings and soothing yourself with food but there are also benefits to staying where you are now.

You have (hidden or not so hidden) negative feelings and pains associated with giving up your overeating habit.

Now uncover these feelings, look them in the eye.

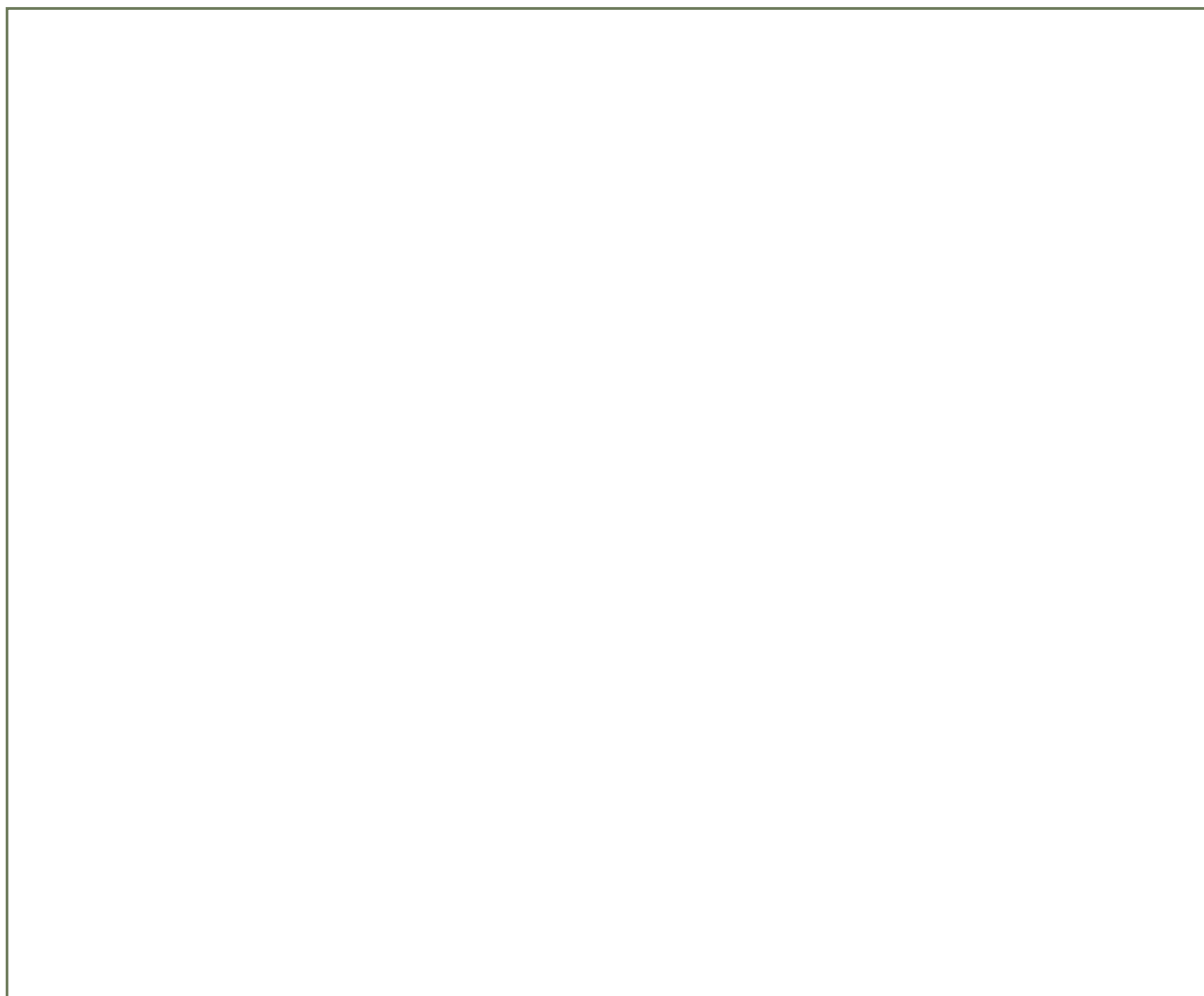
PAINS ASSOCIATED WITH CHANGE

Why haven't I taken action yet? In the past what pain have I linked to taking this action? What will I lose by giving up overeating? What holds me back?



PLEASURES ASSOCIATED WITH NO CHANGE

What pleasure do I link to not taking this action (indulging in overeating)? What are the hidden benefits of staying the same?



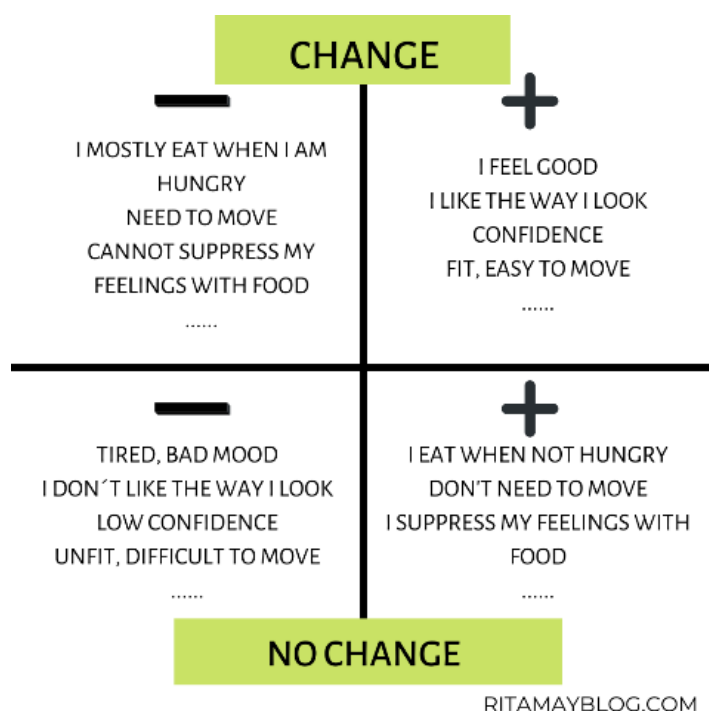
STEP 3

Acknowledge the last two lists but concentrate and focus on the first two lists. Make these lists longer and fill them with emotions. Emotions can hugely amplify the power of these lists.

Read the first two lists daily (or as often as you can) and do your best to remember them when you have the urge to overeat.

Use the [Stop Overeating Meditation](#) to reinforce this in your subconscious mind.

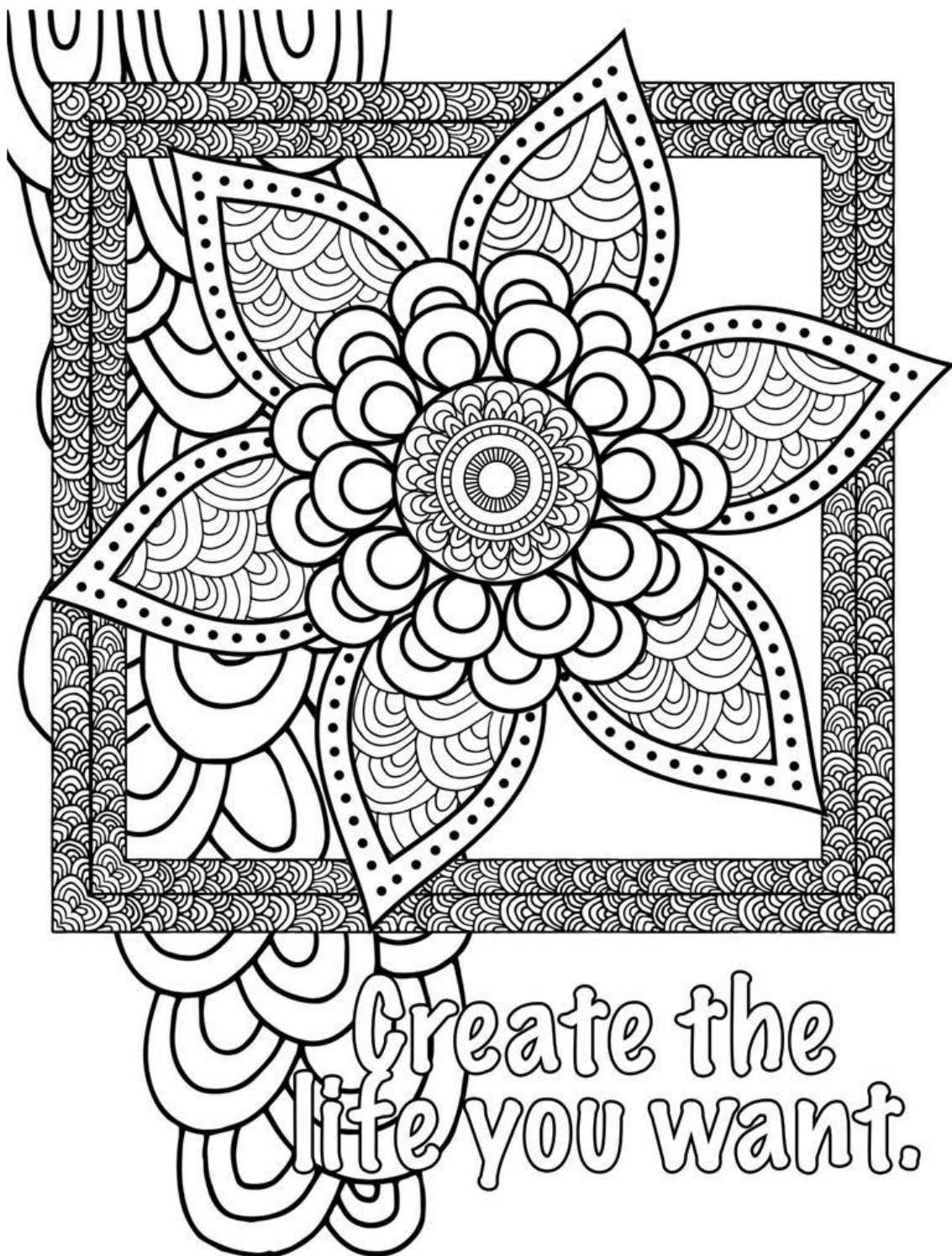
You can also make a graph similar to this:



Be aware that motivation can fluctuate, and it's completely normal. Some days we feel more motivated, while sometimes we are not so motivated.

When we concentrate mainly on the pains associated with not reaching our goal, our motivation weakens when we reach a certain degree of success. Your clothes start to fit better, you overeat less often, and getting rid of the overeating habit doesn't seem that urgent anymore.

When your motivation is low, remind yourself of all the pleasures you associated with reaching your goal. Take your list and read what you wrote there, visualize your new life, and imagine how it will feel to be a natural eater who has a healthy, fit body.



DELETING YOUR LIMITING BELIEFS

DISCOVERING YOUR LIMITING BELIEFS ABOUT YOURSELF, YOUR WEIGHT & BODY

“You’ve been criticizing yourself for years and it hasn’t worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens.” —Louise Hay

There is one important thing I want you to take away from this workbook. Are you ready? Here it is: it is not your fault. It’s not your fault that you struggle with food and overeating and your weight no matter how many times and how hard you tried to get this sorted out before. It’s not your fault!

The problem is that the tools and solutions you tried in the past did not address the real cause of your struggle. You almost certainly tried diets in the past which told you what to eat, what not to eat, when to eat, and how to exercise but they ignored what actually drove you to overeat.

These diets work for a while but then you just can’t stick to them anymore, you lose your willpower and return to your old habits. Why is that? Is it because you don’t have enough willpower? Or because you are weak and lazy? Or you just can’t stick to any plan? Definitely none of these!

It’s because you have not figured out why you tend to eat too much food when you are stressed or angry or lonely or even happy.

Sometimes we have so many failures and associations with pain related to our weight and body image that we start to form the belief that we can’t do anything to make it better. You may start to feel that it’s pointless to try anything new because you will fail again anyway. In psychology, this mindset is called **learned helplessness**.

Those thoughts and feelings will keep you stuck. If you keep thinking based on those past experiences, you will never create anything other than what you have always done. **Your life will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.**

If your internal belief system clashes with your goal of stopping overeating, it will never happen.

We learned our beliefs from our parents, siblings, teachers, friends, books, and other sources in our lives. Our beliefs are filters we see the world through; they are information we heard, memories, and old behaviors that our brain stored and then became our reality. **Our brain constantly looks for evidence to strengthen these beliefs and filters out everything that would weaken them.** Now, these beliefs create our thoughts and feelings about everything, and they drive our automatic actions. And most of the time we are not even aware of them.

Dr. Martin Seligman, in his book *Learned Optimism*, describes three specific patterns of beliefs that cause us to feel helpless: **permanence, pervasiveness, and personal.**

Let's see how these patterns of beliefs relate to overeating:

Permanence

Disempowering belief of a pessimist: I have failed so many times in the past there is no way I can stop overeating, ever.

Empowering belief of an optimist: Overeating is only a habit that I can stop doing once I learn how to do it.

Pervasiveness

Disempowering belief: My whole life is destroyed because I can't stop overeating.

Empowering belief: It's just a challenge with my eating pattern that I can get over.

Personal

Disempowering belief: I am the problem. I'm a failure. I have no willpower. I am lazy. I can't stick to any plan.

Empowering belief: It's a habit I formed, and it has nothing to do with my personality. I did what I could according to my best knowledge at that time.

If you want to change your results don't focus on your behaviors, focus on the beliefs that drive these behaviors.

Our limiting, disempowering beliefs stop us from taking action when we want to do something new based on past (negative) experiences. Our brain's most important tasks are to protect us from pain and to seek pleasure. Eating is no different; we eat to avoid pain (hunger) and to find pleasure in delicious food.

If you dieted before or tried to stop overeating and failed every single time, your brain sees that as pain and wants to protect you from this pain. So it creates beliefs that cause you to think "I can't do this, I don't have enough willpower, nothing works for me". These beliefs make you give up and not even try to change or if you do try to change, you end up self-sabotaging your efforts.

These limiting beliefs about yourself, your weight, and your body can originate from fear of failure (you tried to stop overeating many times and always failed, why would it work this time), fear of success (people will not like you if you change), lack of self-worth (you don't deserve to have everything you want in your life) and many more reasons besides.

It is important that you acknowledge these disempowering negative beliefs about yourself and replace them with positive, empowering beliefs. Remember, as long as you believe something, your brain automatically searches for references to validate your belief and filters everything out that would question it, regardless of whether your belief is positive or negative.

I hope now you see that **figuring out why you eat when you are not physically hungry starts with your beliefs.** The beliefs that gave you the results you see today; your body, your weight, and how you feel about yourself.

So let's discover your beliefs about food, yourself, your weight, and your body. Then we will identify your disempowering beliefs and replace them with empowering positive beliefs. If you complete the following exercises you will get to the root of why you eat too much.

IDENTIFYING YOUR BELIEFS

The very important first step is to brainstorm and come up with all the beliefs you can think of, positive or negative, about food, yourself, your weight, and your body.

Think back to your childhood and note down any memories related to eating, weight, and body image that may have impacted your own attitude towards these things. Think about the different members of your family, your friends and teachers, and the memories or beliefs you associate with each of them.

What surprises you about these memories? What do they teach you?

Think about your if-then beliefs: If I do ..., then I will

Think about your global beliefs about yourself, food, etc. For example healthy food is boring, thin people are mean...

What are you afraid of happening if you stop emotional eating?

Is there a reason you'd rather not stop? What holds you back?

EXAMPLES OF LIMITING AND EMPOWERING BELIEFS

I have listed some typical disempowering beliefs people have about their life and their body (they are inspired and based on Jessica Ortner's ebook: 103 disempowering beliefs about weight loss and body confidence).

As overeating and emotional eating often lead to weight gain or these habits formed due to diets in the past, I've included beliefs about weight loss too. Go through the list and rate

each belief (disempowering and empowering) on how true it feels on a scale of 0 - 10, with 10 being completely true, and 0 being not true at all.

Even if you think you already know your limiting beliefs, please take the time to read through this list. Be honest with yourself about how true each one feels.

After you've identified your limiting beliefs, you'll learn how to delete them and then replace them with new, empowering beliefs that support you on your journey to curb your emotional eating.

	DISEMPOWERING BELIEF	RATING (1-10)	EMPOWERING BELIEF	RATING (1-10)
1.	Food is how I enjoy myself.		I can take pleasure in many other things.	
2.	Eating helps me relax.		I can use meditation, exercise, and other healthy practices to relax.	
3.	When I'm eating, life seems easier.		I can find other ways to release stress.	
4.	I need comfort food to feel better.		I don't need food for comfort. I can do other things to relax.	
5.	I'm a mom/wife/professional/entrepreneur, I don't have time for me.		Making time to care for me makes me an even better mom/ wife/ professional/entrepreneur.	
6.	My kids have to come first.		By taking care of myself, I'm showing my kids how to value and care for themselves in healthy and balanced ways.	
7.	I have to eat on the go. I don't have time for real meals.		I can take time to do healthy things that make me feel good, and that includes preparing balanced meals.	

8.	If I can't cook it in the microwave, I don't have time for it.		I'm excited to eat more fresh food that's not right out of my microwave.	
9.	My body changed after I had kids.		I am so grateful to my body for giving me kids. Now it's time to take better care of it.	
10.	I'll never have the body I had before I had kids.		Having children is a reason to love my body more, not less.	
11.	My metabolism just isn't what it used to be.		My metabolism can and will change as I adopt a healthier lifestyle and stop overeating.	
12.	This is the food I grew up eating.		I'm willing to try new ways of cooking, eating, and living my life.	
13.	I'm weak because I can't control my cravings.		I can use the tools I learn here to calm intense food cravings and allow myself to relax.	
14.	My whole family is heavy/overweight.		My family's weight doesn't determine mine.	
15.	My friends/family don't like it when I lose weight.		I can lose weight for me, not to please other people.	
16.	I can't live without sweets.		I can use the tools learned here to quiet cravings, and then make a choice that supports my health and wellness.	
17.	If I see sweets, I have to eat them.		If I see sweets and feel tempted, I can use the tools I learned to calm my craving.	
18.	As soon as I see food, I have to eat it.		I can create a healthier and more balanced relationship with food.	
19.	I'm always hungry.		I can use my new tools to discover why I'm hungry.	
20.	I don't have time for meditation.		Meditation makes me feel so much more relaxed, it's worth taking time for.	

21.	I hate my body.		I am grateful for all my body has done for me.	
22.	I look fat no matter what I weigh.		It's safe for me to see my body in a new light.	
23.	I'll never be attractive.		I can let my light shine whenever and however I choose.	
24.	People will notice me if I lose weight.		I can feel safe attracting attention.	
25.	I don't like getting attention.		I can attract attention and still feel safe.	
26.	Every time I lose weight, it comes right back.		I can learn the tools to help me relax, lose weight, and keep it off.	
27.	I've been heavy since I was a kid.		I've been heavy for a long time, and I'm ready to change that.	
28.	Healthy food doesn't fill me up.		Healthy food can be very satisfying.	
29.	Cooking my own food is too much work.		I can relax and enjoy cooking healthier food for myself.	
30.	I can't live without _____.		I can make healthy choices and still enjoy treats, just in moderation.	
31.	The holidays just won't be the same without all that great food.		I can enjoy the holidays, including the food, without overstuffing myself.	
32.	No matter what I try, I can't lose weight.		My past experiences don't determine my present or future.	
33.	I can never lose more than __ lbs.		My body can shed weight naturally.	
34.	I need to lose weight before I can sort out my relationship with food.		I can lose weight healthily once I sorted out my relationship with food.	
35.	I'm big-boned.		Calling myself "fat" and "big-boned" makes me feel bad, so I'm going to practice not using those labels.	

36.	I don't have the body type to be thin.		I can appreciate my body as it is, and support it even more by losing weight in a healthy, balanced, and nourishing way.	
37.	I can't stop bingeing and restricting because I'll gain weight.		If I stop restricting I'll stop bingeing and will lose weight.	
38.	People don't like me because I'm big.		People like me for who I am.	
39.	People feel sorry for me because I'm big.		People appreciate me for who I am.	
40.	I'm a failure because I'm big.		My weight does not define me or my life.	
41.	To lose weight, I have to starve myself.		I can lose weight while still really enjoying food, just in moderation.	
42.	To lose weight, I have to give up everything I love.		I can lose weight and still do things I love to do.	
43.	To lose weight, I have to stop going out with friends/family.		I can still have a great social life when I'm losing weight.	
44.	Losing weight means giving up everything that's fun.		I can lose weight and enjoy my life even more.	
45.	Keeping weight off is too hard.		I can keep the weight off without depriving myself.	

Which negative beliefs got the highest scores? Those are your disempowering beliefs, plus the beliefs you found in the previous brainstorming exercise.

Congratulations, you've identified your negative beliefs! This was a very important step towards your freedom from overeating.

Make sure to save your list of limiting beliefs, since you'll need them for the next exercises.

After doing this exercise, people often feel bad about discovering a lot of limiting beliefs about themselves. But don't worry, it's completely normal to have a long list! Usually, there are a few key limiting beliefs that are the biggest blocks. Once those are eliminated, your life will quickly start to transform.

Have you also found high scoring empowering beliefs? No problem if you haven't, we will work on that in the next parts.

DELETING OLD NEGATIVE LIMITING BELIEFS

Here you will find exercises to reprogram your subconscious mind and delete your negative beliefs.

Write down with a pencil all your disempowering/limiting beliefs you discovered in one column. Write the truth/empowering beliefs next to it in another column with a pen.

DISEMPOWERING BELIEFS (WITH A PENCIL)	EMPOWERING BELIEFS (WITH A PEN)

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FIRST 7 DAYS

NEGATIVE BELIEFS

For 7 days read both columns every morning, or whenever you have a few minutes when you can be alone and no one disturbs you, **and feel the feelings that come up during the process.**

Stop at each belief and tune in to how your body feels.

Do you have some stress and anxiety around this belief? I want you to know that it is safe to feel these feelings.

How do you feel? Why do you feel this way?

If these feelings are too much to handle, try to look at the belief from the outside as if you were someone else, someone who loves and supports you. What would this person say?

Is this belief true or just a story?

Are you absolutely sure it's true? If you were in court could you defend it?

Is it possible that it's not true?

How would you feel if it wasn't true?

Is the person you learned this belief from worth modelling in this area?

Can you let this negative belief go?

What will it cost you emotionally if you don't let this belief go?

What will it cost you in your relationships if you don't let this belief go?

What will it cost you physically if you don't let this belief go?

What will it cost you financially if you don't let this belief go? How much money could you save if you stopped spending money on food that your body doesn't need?

What will it cost to your family/loved ones if you don't let this belief go?

Your past is not your future. Past experiences are not predictive of future results. Welcome the past, embrace it, accept it, learn from it. But don't let it hold you back. Don't let your past stories and beliefs imprison you. Let them go, release them, set them free, unclench your fist that is holding them tight, drop them.

Choose to let go and forgive any people or situations that caused you pain in the past.

Forgiveness sets you free. Forgive yourself too!

The more positivity you add into your life, the better you will feel, and the less you will need to find joy, fulfilment, or relief in eating.

POSITIVE BELIEFS

Now for each negative belief write a new story reframed in a positive way. These are your empowering beliefs. Read these too and feel the feelings that come up. Tune into your body again.

What would your life look like without compulsive eating?

Imagine that while you're asleep tonight a miracle happens and your problem is completely solved. When you wake up what will be the first thing that tells you that this miracle has happened? (This is a similar exercise to the future self exercise, so if you answered these there, it's enough if you only remember those feelings here again.)

What will your perfect day look like?

What will you look like?

Who else would notice that this miracle has happened?

How would you behave if you knew it was all possible for you?

How would you feel if you knew it was all possible for you?

What is it you truly desire?



Are you a Lucifer fan too? 😊

"Desire is a teacher: When we immerse ourselves in it without guilt, shame or clinging, it can show us something special about our own minds that allows us to embrace life fully."

Danielle LaPorte

Which of your beliefs stops you from having what you desire?

What will you no longer be available for, as of today?

--

What are your new positive, empowering, life-enhancing beliefs? Write them down here or in the table above.

--

NEXT 14 DAYS

After 7 days go through the limiting beliefs list and read the beliefs out loud and say after each of them to your subconscious mind: **“Thank you for storing this for me but it no longer serves me. Cancel, clear, delete”** & rub them off with a rubber.

Additionally, you can also write all your limiting beliefs on a piece of paper, read them out loud, and say after each one of them: “Thank you for storing this for me but it no longer serves me. Cancel, clear, delete” and scribble over them. Then to make the closure even more prominent burn the paper.

From now on read only the positive beliefs for 14 days. Really concentrate on the emotions and feelings that these positive beliefs generate for you. Use them as mantras. You may still

have some resistance to them and feel like you can't believe them. Don't worry. With the exercises in the following section, we will strengthen these beliefs.

Track the days when you've read your beliefs: add ticks or "done" to the columns when you have read the beliefs and tuned into your feelings about them.

READ BOTH FOR 7 DAYS		
Day	Disempowering beliefs	Empowering beliefs
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
READ THE EMPOWERING BELIEFS FOR 14 DAYS		
Days		Empowering beliefs
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		

Well done, you have done it!! You are amazing! You are making great progress. Repeat this exercise 2-3 times a year or as often as you feel like your limiting beliefs are holding you back and keeping you stuck.

STRENGTHENING YOUR NEW EMPOWERING BELIEFS

Beliefs started as ideas at the beginning. You heard something from someone. Then you looked for evidence to support this idea and the more evidence you found the stronger this belief became.

The problem is that you can find evidence for whatever you want to concentrate on. Let's say you heard from someone that you will gain weight as you get older. You started to look for evidence and you found that indeed your mother and your grandmother gained weight as they aged. But you could have equally easily found evidence for the opposite too: your other grandmother and the neighbor lady are thin and they are in their 70s. The references we find are always distorted by our perspective and our brain filters for the information that supports our beliefs.

So now, to strengthen your new empowering beliefs, look for pieces of evidence that prove the positive belief true. Look for at least 3 references for each of your new empowering beliefs.

Start acting as if you believe your new beliefs. Your subconscious mind will start to filter for information supporting your new beliefs.

Also, start to take action based on your new beliefs. The results of these new actions will provide new evidence to prove your new beliefs.

If you are still struggling, ask yourself: What would I have to believe to succeed? What would my successful future self do in this situation? Who is already successful in this area and what do they believe that I don't? Copy them.

Spend time with these people and their positive beliefs will rub onto you too. The more opportunities you have to see positive examples of a healthy relationship with food, weight management without dieting, love, success, and happiness, the more you will change your beliefs about your own life and possibilities. If you can't find these people in your real life, find them online. Listen to [uplifting podcasts](#), for example, or watch happy movies, find positive online friends.

NEW EMPOWERING BELIEF	EVIDENCE
1.	1.
	2.
	3.

2.	1.
	2.
	3.
3.	1.
	2.
	3.
4.	1.

	2.
	3.
5.	1.
	2.
	3.
6.	1.
	2.
	3.

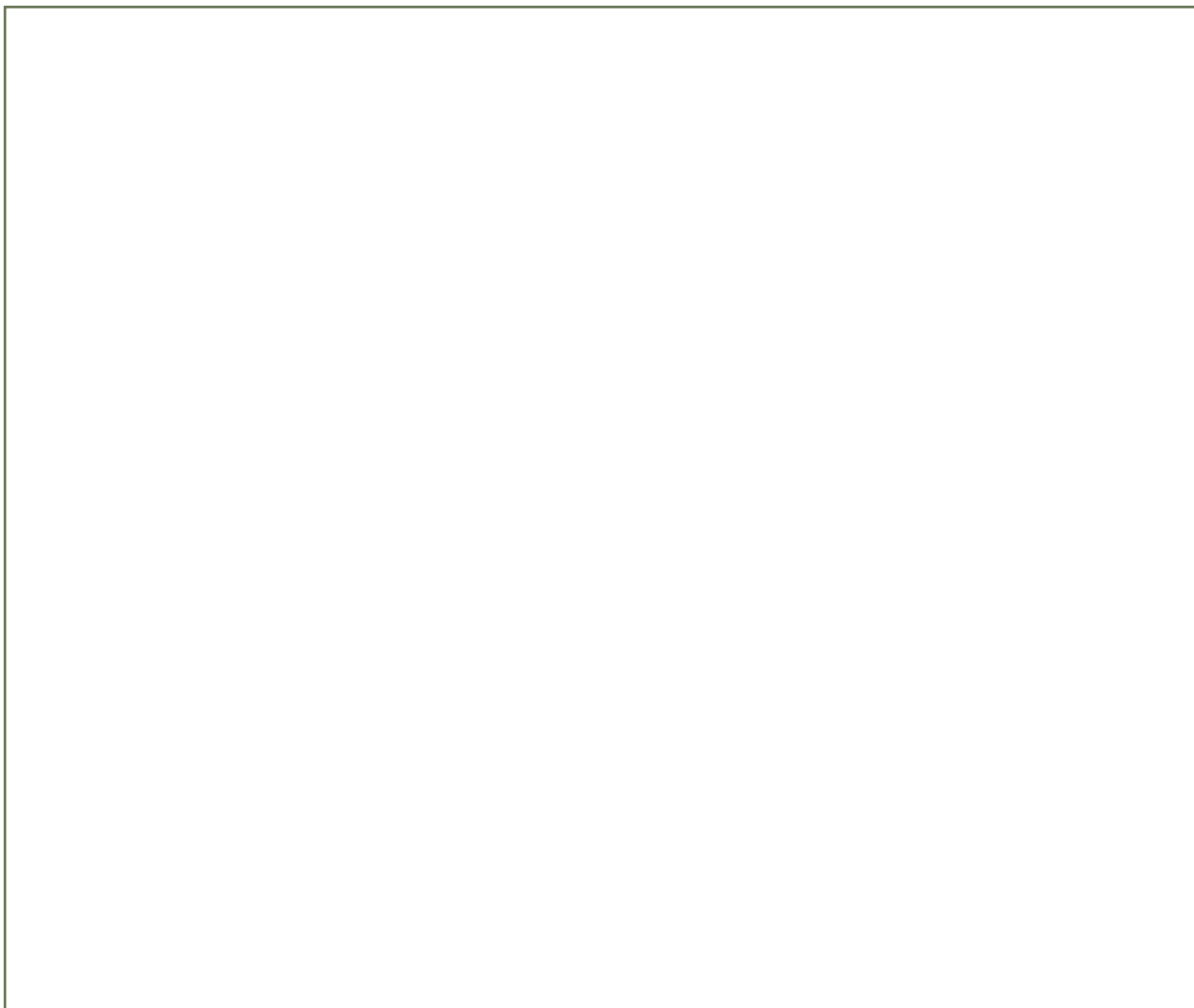
7.	1.
	2.
	3.

ACHIEVEMENT LIST

To feel more empowered list all your achievements, everything you are proud of so far in your life. Ask yourself:

- What are my biggest achievements in my life?
- When did I manage to do the seemingly impossible?
- When did I feel totally loved?
- When did I feel super proud?
- When did I feel totally confident?
- What would my best friend say about me?
- What would a mentor or a nice family member name as my biggest achievement?

Praise yourself.



FUN TIPS:

- Use canva.com or PowerPoint to create graphics for each of your positive beliefs and set them as a rolling screensaver on your desktop and phone.
- Record your positive mantras in your own voice and listen to them while you meditate and before you go to sleep.
- Write your empowering beliefs on post-its and stick them where you can see them.
- Use a lipstick and write your favorite empowering belief on your bathroom mirror so that you see it first thing in the morning and before you go to bed.

Congratulations on finishing this section! This was a very long and important topic. Well done getting through it!

Come back to this section often, especially if you find new blocks in your way to reaching your goal, and check if you have any undiscovered limiting, disempowering beliefs that you need to replace with empowering beliefs.



SELF-SABOTAGING YOUR EFFORTS

Self-sabotage is such an important topic that I want to talk about it separately here.

Self-sabotage is when you know you should do something but you don't do it anyway. Or you reach a certain level of success but you start to feel uncomfortable and you return to your old habits and self-sabotage your success.

Before we start discussing this topic, I want you to do something. Whenever something negative happens (overeating, binging) that makes you feel bad, the first step is to accept that feeling. Look in the mirror and repeat to yourself:

I feel , and I'm ok with that, I accept it.

Self-acceptance is key, and you should accept yourself in all shapes and forms.

FEAR OF FAILURE

"People who self-handicap purposely shoot themselves in the foot in order to protect themselves from having to confront their possible shortcomings. Many self-handicapping behaviors are those small, subtle bad habits like being late, gossiping, micromanaging, behaving passive-aggressively, or being a perfectionist. We may not recognize these self-defeating--and self-handicapping--traits for what they are. Or we may even wrongly perceive them as strengths. But in truth, they often get in the way of us blooming." — Rich Karlgaard

The primary tasks of our mind are to keep us alive, to protect us from pain, and to seek pleasure. Has this ever happened to you? You have a bad experience (you fail at a test, have a bad presentation, don't do well at a sporting event). You say to yourself, "I never want to experience this horror again!". Your brain starts working on making this wish come true

because it wants to protect you from this pain by any means. That's why you start to feel uncomfortable when you need to do something similar again.

So the next time you face a similar task, your brain will try to prevent you from being involved. You might feel completely blocked and unable to say a word, you might panic or feel sick, your stomach or head might start to hurt. Consequently, you won't be able to do the thing you should do, in other words you self-sabotage your own effort.

It works the same way with bad experiences around your weight, body image, and eating habits.

Maybe you tried to lose weight or give up overeating and emotional eating but you have never managed to succeed. Now you don't even want to try because you are scared that you will fail again. Every failure has a negative effect on your self-esteem and this can be damaging, especially when your self-esteem is not very strong to start with.

Your **fear of failure** might manifest itself in thoughts and feelings that getting rid of your unwanted eating habits

- is too difficult
- takes too long
- is impossible because you won't have the willpower to do it
- means that you will have to deprive yourself.

These negative thoughts and feelings will stop you either during the process or might even stop you before you get started.

What negative thoughts and feelings do you associate with giving up overeating or emotional eating?

FEAR OF SUCCESS

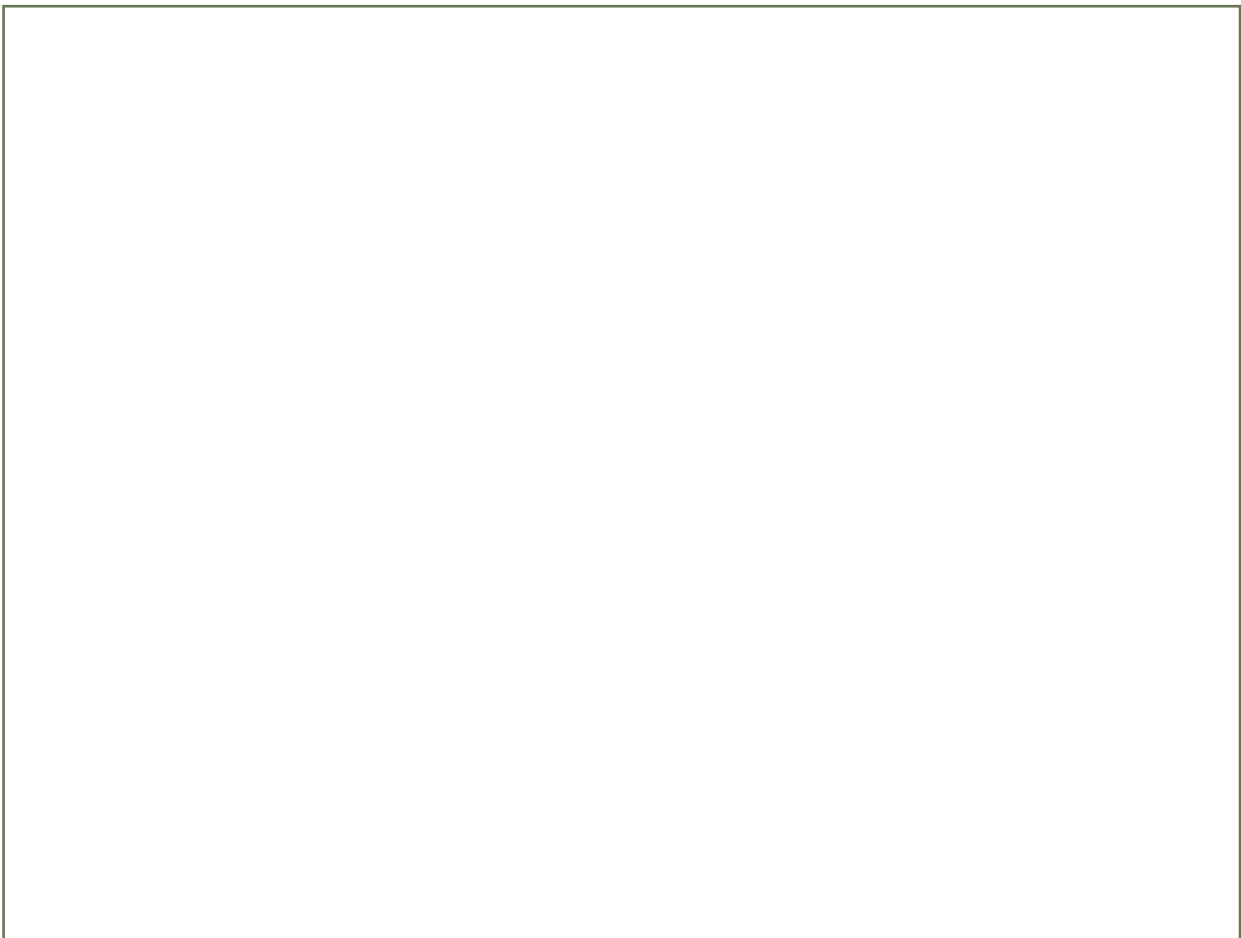
“Sometimes we self-sabotage just when things seem to be going smoothly. Perhaps this is a way to express our fear about whether it is okay for us to have a better life. We are bound to feel anxious as we leave behind old notions of our unworthiness. The challenge is not to be fearless, but to develop strategies of acknowledging our fears and finding out how we can allay them.”— Maureen Brady

Another reason for self-sabotage is **fear of success**.

There is always a downside to our dreams. Of course, you want to end the struggle with overeating and emotional eating, you want to eat normally again, you want to not think about food all the time and you want to lose the extra weight you gained due to eating when you were not hungry. But there is always something lurking in your mind that makes you feel bad

about your success. Probably you are not even aware of these thoughts and feelings but they make you self-sabotage. You need to get really clear of them.

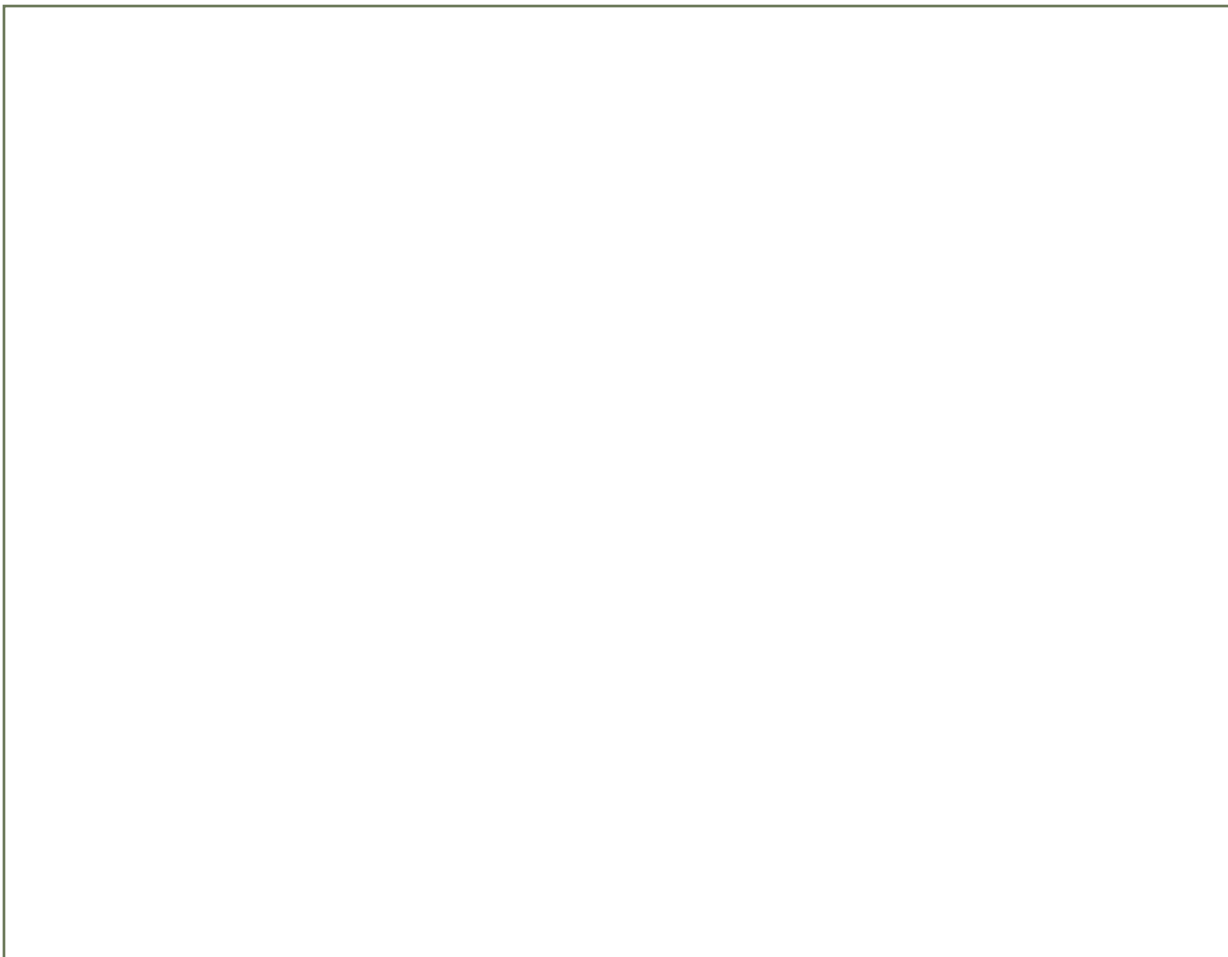
What are the downsides of your goal? If you stop emotional eating/overeating what bad things can happen? E.g. if I stop emotional eating I need to face my feelings, I won't be able to use food to release stress, I need to pay attention to my hunger signals, my overweight friends will not accept me, I will lose my protective fat layer and people will notice me, I might attract sexual attention, etc.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write down the downsides of their goal as prompted in the text above.

Now imagine for both fears (fear of failure and fear of success) the worst-case scenario. Imagine all the details of it. This way you already know what awaits you, your mind knows what

to expect, and it won't be so afraid of it. If you prepare yourself for the worst scenario you won't be so anxious about it.

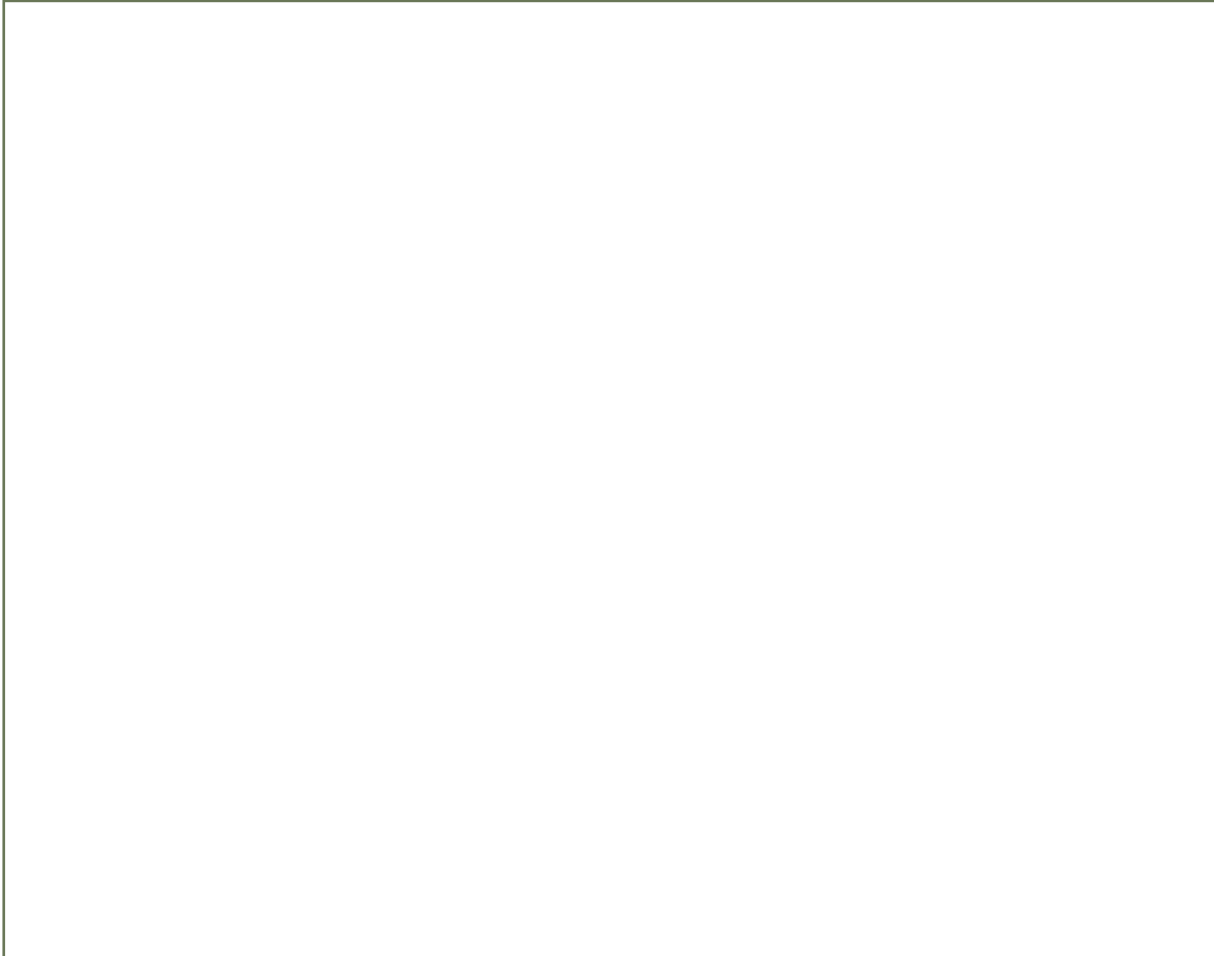
What's the worst thing that can happen? E.g. Even though I will have to face my feelings, what's the worst thing that can happen? Keep asking for each fear until you reach a point when no more answers come. You will see that it won't kill you, you will realize that nothing really bad will happen, and if it happens it happens. Then create a backup plan for this situation. This way you reassure your brain that even if something goes wrong you will be able to handle it.

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The next step is to add a pleasurable experience to the negative experience. For example, even though I will have to face my feelings, I will buy myself a nice dress because I will lose weight if I

don't overeat anymore. Trick your brain by praising yourself when something bad happens. Praise yourself for failure. As humans we fail a lot and that is ok. Failure is just feedback that you can learn from.

What pleasurable experiences are you going to add to your negative experiences? Find one for each of the downsides.

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The final step is to do [“Future self meditation”](#). It will help you imagine the BEST thing that can happen, and you will use your imagination to explore that scenario.

After practicing these exercises negative situations won't cause you anxiety, instead they will be completely neutral. Therefore, they will not make you self-sabotage.

The remedy for our childhood fear of monsters lurking under the bed was to shine a light into the darkness. Once we did, it revealed the truth – there were no monsters. Once we shine the light of truth at what scares us, we often discover our fears to be unfounded.

It's human nature to worry. But **research has shown that 85% of what you worry about never actually happens.**

Let that sink in for a moment.

MOST OF YOUR FEARS NEVER COME TRUE!

The same research reveals that, when misfortune did occur, people found they usually handled the situation better than expected. Not only that, they learned something valuable from their 'misfortune', often even feeling as though the fear was worse than the actual situation.

When you feel fear, you need to learn to feel excited.

Stop saying, "Oh, but I'm so afraid, I'm so scared, I really don't want to do this"! You need to tell yourself, "I can do this, I'll do it, I cannot wait to see what it will be like, I'm so curious"! You have to paint the event as exciting, interesting, and joyful in your mind because our mind leads us to pleasant experiences and wants to protect us from unpleasant experiences at all costs.

Never tell yourself "I'm scared" or "I'm nervous", tell yourself instead: "I'm excited!"

When it comes right down to it, we don't have much control over the good and bad things that happen to us. Two critical things we do have control over is our mindset and our responses to our circumstances.

Think of a fear you're facing (or avoiding) right now. Ask yourself, what would your life look like if you decided to face that fear, head on? What would it feel like if you showed courage – even a little bit? The courage to take a risk. The courage to be your true self. The courage to love others. The courage to love yourself.

Will it be easy? No. Will you face obstacles? Yes. Will you make mistakes? Yes.

But remember, your dreams aren't meant to collect dust on a shelf or, even more heartbreakingly, to be taken with you to your grave.

MASOCHISTIC EQUILIBRIUM

I heard about masochistic equilibrium from Karen Salmansohn, a happiness guru. It's like having an **internal maximum happiness thermostat** that tells you how much happiness you can or deserve to have. If for some reason **you are happier than your set maximum, it feels "too good to be true" and you start self-sabotaging your happiness.**

This masochistic equilibrium level is formed much earlier in your life. Maybe your parents fought a lot when you were a child and this became your "normal" model. Therefore, whenever you are in a peaceful relationship you feel uneasy and start to fight or cause trouble to go back to your "normal" happiness level.

Maybe your mother was always on a diet but never managed to lose weight and this is what your subconscious mind finds "normal". Consequently, whenever you lose weight it makes you self-sabotage and you gain the weight back.

Basically, due to your past experiences and maybe traumas you are only comfortable with a certain amount of happiness. Maybe it's 80% happiness and 20% pain in your life, or 50% - 50% or 30% - 70%, only you know.

"What is required for many of us, paradoxical though it may sound, is the courage to tolerate happiness without self-sabotage." — Nathaniel Branden

How can you break free from this masochistic equilibrium and increase your happiness set-point?

FIND A POSITIVE LESSON IN YOUR NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

Find the positive lessons in your negative past experiences and start to forgive your past.

Forgiveness sets you free.

What positive lessons can you find in your negative past experiences? Who do you need to forgive?



REMOVE THE NEGATIVE TRIGGERS FROM YOUR LIFE AND REPLACE THEM WITH "HAPPY TRIGGERS"

Negative triggers that can cause a downward spiral of negative thoughts and behaviors need to go. For example, remove trigger foods from the house if you know you can't resist them and replace them with healthy options. Throw out everything you have from your ex and replace them with objects you have from happy relationships. Remove every object from your life that make you feel bad (if possible).

What are you going to remove?

USE A MANTRA

When you are tempted to go down the negative spiral repeat the following mantra from Karen Salmansohn:

“I am not my past behavior. I’m not my past failures. Nor am I how others have at one time treated me. I am only who I think I am right now in this moment. I’m only what I do right now in this moment.”

If this mantra is too long to remember, choose one sentence that resonates with you the most and use that as a mantra.

FIND YOUR PASSION OR A HOBBY

According to Carl Jung when our lives don’t have meaning and purpose we indulge in bad habits to create drama and excitement to have something stimulating and interesting in our life, even if this is a bad thing. Jung calls this phenomenon “low-level spiritual quests”.

The easiest way to stop doing this is to find a passion or hobby (a “high-level spiritual quest”) that you really enjoy doing and that can give you a purpose and spark that feeling of happy excitement. It could be writing, mountain climbing, painting, photography, meditating, dancing, anything.

If you want to find your purpose, I have a guide for you that you can download from here: [Find your Purpose Guide](#)

INTEGRATION OF PARTS

As I mentioned in the How to stop binge eating chapter, you have two parts. Let's call it "parts" because people refer to it that way:

- Part of me just took over.
- There is a part of me I can't control.
- Part of me wants to stop, but another part wants to continue.

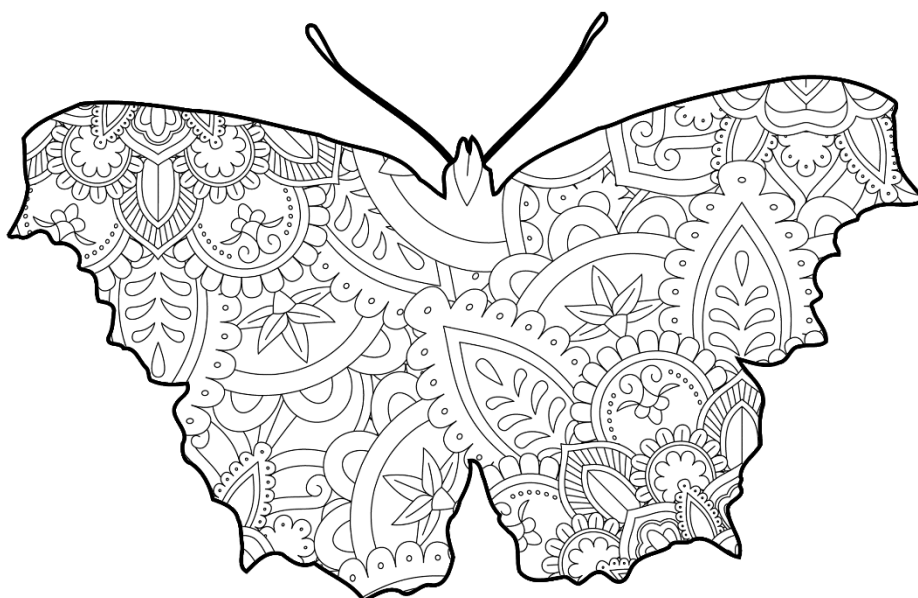
One part is your conscious mind that wants to change. It thinks logically, it knows that change is beneficial and your life will improve if you change your habits and it's fully on board. The other part, a part of your subconscious mind, tries to protect you from pain. This part formed a long time ago to deal with a certain pain but this pain is most likely not relevant anymore.

For example, you may associate chocolate with love because when you were a child someone expressed their love by giving you chocolate. Now you think you crave chocolate but what you truly want is love. But your subconscious always suggests you eat chocolate whenever you feel unloved or lonely because it is acting on the information that chocolate made you feel loved when you were a child.

This part of you has good intentions. It tries to help you even when you want it to go away; even if you hate it, it remains. It's very persistent and convinced that it's doing something good for you.

This part of you is really important and valuable: we need to have a part that protects us from pain and danger. What you need to do is to acknowledge its good intentions, thank it for trying to help you relentlessly, and maybe even apologize for being mean to it. Then you want to update the information that it is basing its actions on (think about it like a computer program update) and give it new directions to help you achieve your goals.

live
FREE



WHAT TO EAT TO STOP BINGE EATING

Let's talk about what to eat to be able to stop bingeing or emotional eating.

First of all, you need to stop restrictive diets because they are the main reason for developing the restriction-binge cycle.

When you are on a diet you have pre-determined portions, types of food, and meal eating windows. You don't listen to your body and eat when you are hungry and stop when you are full, but instead, you rely on numbers. How many calories, carbs, protein, etc. you can have.

But we are not a furnace burning the same amount of calories every day. Our appetite changes from day to day depending on our activity level, stress level, how much we slept, and our menstrual cycle. When you are on a diet some days you are not that hungry but you eat your allocated calories just because you can. On other days you starve at the end of the day but don't let yourself eat because no more calories left for that day.

On days like this, you might not have the willpower to resist the food and you overeat to make up for all the lost and future opportunities because tomorrow you need to restrict again. This is how yo-yo dieting starts.

You Might Have a Bigger Appetite and More Cravings

Your body is very smart and knows what it's doing. When your body doesn't get the nutrients and calories it needs, it switches to survival mode.

When it doesn't get enough calories it sends you hunger signals and makes you crave food that gives you quick energy. These are usually high-calorie junk foods.

But even if you eat a large meal, if it's not more or less balanced, your body will miss vital nutrients. Your tummy may be full but your body still wants you to continue to eat so maybe you finally eat something that contains the missing nutrients.

No wonder you are constantly hungry. And when you are hungry it's hard to concentrate on anything else. You start thinking about what you will eat for lunch during breakfast, about your dinner during lunch, and your breakfast during dinner.

Your brain wants you to survive and regularly not getting enough food sets off a warning signal in your survival brain that your life is in danger, there is a problem with the food supply. It doesn't know that you deliberately withhold food to lose weight. It increases hunger and cravings to get you more food.

We have two different hunger hormones – leptin and ghrelin. Ghrelin is the hormone that increases your appetite, while leptin decreases your appetite, and can help you feel full. When you diet, the hormone leptin often decreases, while ghrelin increases, creating an imbalance.

Your survival brain also decreases your metabolism so you burn fewer calories than before dieting to save energy. This means you can eat even less if you want to lose weight. It may seem like you are out of control, but this is not about willpower, it is actually from dieting itself. So you are always hungry, you have intense cravings, and after a while, you overeat or binge.

The next morning you freak out, you feel like you need to make up for all the food you ate last night too so you diet even harder, eat even less, and exercise even more. But your brain also freaks out and fights back even stronger and next time you binge harder. And this goes on and on... and the binges become more frequent and the urge to do it more intense.

You also lose motivation.

When you went on a weight-loss diet the first time it was kind of exciting. You had a lot of motivation, positive attitude and you were convinced that you would succeed.

But after many failed attempts you can't summon these positive feelings anymore. You don't feel motivated, you think that you are going to fail again anyway, what's the point, why would it work this time, you can't stick to any plan. You can't believe that you can lose weight anymore and you feel like a failure.

These thoughts make you do the current diet half-heartedly and you don't feel motivated to stick to your plan. Consequently, you fail again, proving yourself that what you thought was true and you are indeed a failure and you can't lose weight.

It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Now you feel bad about yourself and you turn to food for comfort (often to a lot of food because "what's the point of trying to eat better if I don't lose weight anyway"). Can you see how dieting doesn't help you lose weight and it may even make you gain weight?

FINDING BALANCE

It's better for you if you stop undereating and overexercising, give up the diets, and start to eat a healthy balanced diet, and start to move regularly to feel good, not to lose weight. You can find a balance when you eat and move the right amount for your own individual body. Not too much, not too little, just right. Like Goldilocks. When you find this balance you will be able to sustain these healthy habits for a long time, stop bingeing and lose weight sustainably.

When I tried to lose weight in my 20s I didn't care about the nutritional value of my food. All I cared about was how could I eat the least amount of calories. Of course, I was constantly hungry. And then I went home to my parents at the end of the week and I binged on all the yummy food my mum cooked. And I starved myself during the week and binged on the weekends. And my weight was slowly going up despite all the hunger during the week. My body was in survival mode and stored fat for the time when the "famine" came again and it didn't want to lose it because the famine always came.

Then I learned that if I eat healthy balanced meals during the week my body gets all the calories and nutrients it needs and it won't be so hungry. Then I was able to eat just normal portions from my mum's delicious food too. Sometimes I didn't even feel like eating dessert. (This was a difficult situation as my mum likes to feed us and takes it as a personal insult if we don't eat a lot, but she got used to my new way of eating :-))

And I lost weight too.

For me, the key was adding protein and fats to my diet. When I wanted to lose weight I just ate fruits, vegetables, salads, rice cakes, rice, instant soups, sometimes some yogurt. And I exercised a lot too. No wonder I was so hungry all the time and thought about food constantly. I needed to balance my diet with some proteins and healthy fats.

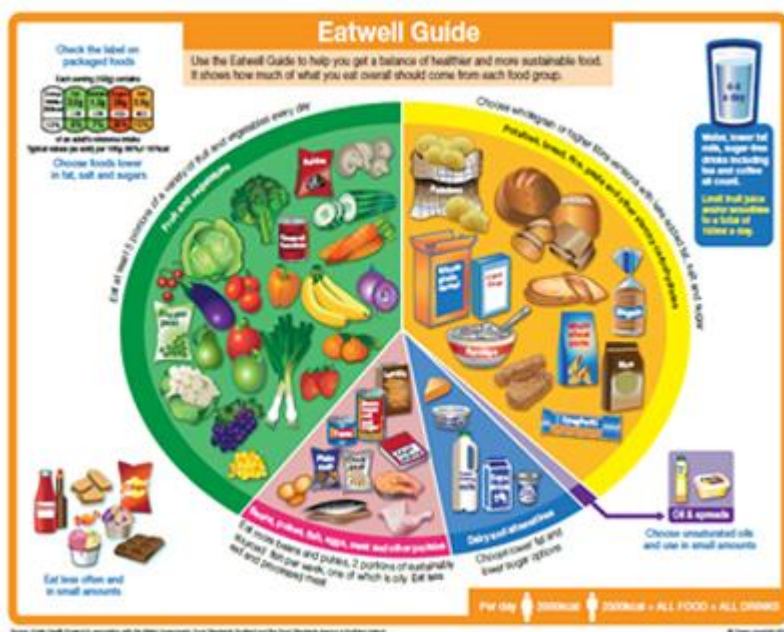
BALANCED MEAL

Now you are probably wondering what a balanced meal looks like.

A balanced meal contains all the food groups, proteins, carbohydrates and fats.

A good starting point can be the [Eat Well Guide](#). Of course, you can adjust the ratio of the food groups to your own preference. Some people feel better when they eat more carbohydrates, others when they eat more fat, or any other combinations. The main thing is that your meal contains whole foods in a proportion that makes you feel the best. You are not hungry until your next meal, you feel satiated and you enjoy the food you eat.

If you eat 3 roughly balanced meals a day and a roughly balanced snack if you are hungry between meals you will feel satisfied, not hungry, you won't think about your next meal all day long, and will be able to lose weight too. You don't need to obsess about these proportions. If your meal doesn't contain all the food groups every time, that's ok. Just try to make most of your meals more or less balanced and pay attention to your body's signals. When do you feel the best? Which foods and food group ratio give you the most energy and the feeling of fullness until your next meal?



Another very important thing is that you allow yourself to eat your favorite processed foods too so you don't feel deprived of anything. Make sure you don't have a restrictive, dieting mindset. **You can eat whatever you want and whenever you want it.** If you can have anything anytime, the formerly prohibited foods eventually will lose their allure and you won't be so drawn to them.

NEUTRALIZING FOOD

If you've been dieting and been restricting certain foods for a long time, first you need to neutralize those foods. At the moment if you eat them you feel like you can't stop eating them.

If you tell yourself that you can't or shouldn't have a particular food, it leads to intense cravings and the feeling of deprivation, which often leads to binging on the forbidden food or eating something else, that's allowed, in large quantities. What the worst part is that you don't even

enjoy these foods while eating them because you feel so guilty. You are better off eating a normal portion of what you really want.

In this case, you need to first let yourself eat whatever you want to eat, and shouldn't think about the "Eat well plate". Just eat anything you crave any time you are hungry. Maybe you think it's crazy because you will only eat ice cream and fries and chocolate and wine all day long. But believe me, you won't. Maybe for a while, you will, but soon you'll notice that you don't feel good eating only those things. You'll feel tired and lethargic.

After a while, you'll start craving more nutritious foods because they make you feel better. It may take some time but you will get there. When you know that you can have more food whenever you are hungry, and this food is something you enjoy, instead of something you "should" eat, it's easy to stop eating when you're comfortably full.

You'll start to choose more nutritious foods not because you should, but because you feel better when you eat that way. You won't need to prove to yourself anymore that you can eat all the foods you weren't allowed before. You will know that those once-forbidden foods will always be there, and if you want to eat them, you can. As they aren't forbidden anymore, they'll be less exciting.

When you choose to eat them you'll enjoy them fully without guilt and shame and you'll not feel like you have to eat large amounts of them because you can have them again whenever you want to. So you'll feel satisfied with a much smaller amount than ever before.

And then you will naturally gravitate towards something like the "Eat well plate" because it makes you feel good. Your body gets all the nutrients and enough calories and you won't be hungry and think about food all the time.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR WEIGHT?

You might be worried about what happens to your weight if you let yourself eat your forbidden foods. If you were on a very restrictive diet and you were undereating you will probably gain a bit of weight initially. But then your weight settles at your weight set-point.

If you've been overeating and bingeing a lot and gained some weight, you will eventually lose the extra weight and you will reach your weight set-point too.

What is this mysterious weight set-point? It's a weight range where your body naturally likes to be. It's different for everyone and it depends on our genetics and environment/habits.

You can read more about how to change your weight set-point in this blog post:

[Are You Stuck At A Weight? How Can You Lower Your Weight Set-Point?](#)

Now let's see how to enjoy your food more by eating mindfully.

MINDFUL EATING

MINDFUL EATING TO HELP CURB EMOTIONAL EATING

If you have developed the habit of emotional eating, in other words you immediately crave a specific type of food or volume of food when you are stressed, sad, anxious, upset, or even happy, then mindful eating can help you tremendously, especially if you find yourself mindlessly eating a large amount without even tasting what you are eating.

It is important that you try a variety of things until you figure out what helps your own issues with emotional eating, but mindful eating is a great tool.

WHAT IS MINDFUL EATING?

Mindfulness itself can be seen as a form of gentle meditation, where you are focusing on your current feelings or emotions, instead of clearing your mind entirely like with regular meditation. Mindful eating uses this same approach to get you to focus on what you are eating and just be in the moment.

Mindful eating is a process that you can use to gain control over your eating habits.

Sometimes when you eat, you're tired, bored, stressed, or just don't want to think; you want to zone out. During these types of eating rituals, time may seem to pass quickly without you noticing, or even more distressing, you look down and realize that you completely demolished a whole bag of chips.

One great way to deal with this habit is to make it a point to practice slow, mindful eating.

During mindful eating, instead of just sitting down with food and concentrating on something else, you are focusing on your food: the texture and taste, the temperature, how your body feels, and what is going through your mind at the time of eating.

Slow, mindful eating is the secret weight-loss weapon everyone has access to, but nobody knows about.

HOW DOES MINDFUL EATING HELP WITH EMOTIONAL EATING?

The reason mindful eating helps so much with emotional eating is that it helps you experience the food itself, not just use it to cover up your emotions.

With emotional eating, people tend to hurry up and eat as fast as possible, without really thinking about the food. You get into this state where you are in a hurry to just feel something else to cover up what you are trying to hide, which leads to a sense of unfulfillment both physically and emotionally.

With mindful eating, you are aware of your body the entire time, and understand when you are full or just no longer enjoying what you are eating. A big sign that you are eating emotionally that you can discover through mindful eating is that you keep eating even after the food no longer interests you and doesn't taste good anymore.

MINDFUL EATING CAN HELP YOU STOP BINGE EATING TOO

This might sound unbelievable, since a binge is driven by an overwhelming urge to eat as much food as possible, as fast as possible. This differentiates binge eating from simply overeating.

So how does this work? Use the "slow binging" technique.

THE "SLOW BINGING" TECHNIQUE

This is what you need to do: when you start binging, try to slow down as soon as you realize what's happening. I know it's hard but even a few seconds count.

Pause. Breathe. Even just one breath between bites will help.

You probably won't be able to stop eating, and that's okay. How much you eat isn't as important as getting back into a more mindful state instead of the unconscious, mindless eating state. You know, when it feels like a monster took over your body.

By practicing this technique every time you have a binge eating episode, over time you will get more effective at regaining control over your eating habit.

- You'll become more aware of why, where, and how you're bingeing (so it won't seem random, and eventually you can find solutions to prevent it).
- You'll likely eat less and stop sooner.
- You'll feel less panicked and powerless.
- You'll learn to soothe yourself more effectively using other ways than eating.

Don't be hard on yourself: if you forget to or can't slow down during one meal, just slow down next time, and notice what happens.

OTHER BENEFITS OF SLOW, MINDFUL EATING

YOU WILL EAT LESS WITHOUT FEELING DEPRIVED

You will eat less without feeling deprived even if you don't change what you eat.

In one study, the University of Rhode Island researchers served the same pasta lunch to 30 normal-weight women on two different days. At both meals, participants were told to eat until comfortably full.

But they had to eat differently on those two days.

Day 1: Eat as fast as you can.

Day 2: Eat slowly and put your utensils down between every bite.

The results:

On day 1 the women consumed 646 calories in 9 minutes.

On day 2 they consumed 579 calories in 29 minutes.

So, interestingly, on day 2 they ate 67 fewer calories in 20 more minutes.

Besides, they also became hungry later afterward compared to when they ate their lunch quickly.

If you eat slowly at every meal and snack, you can save hundreds of calories in a day without changing what you eat.

BETTER DIGESTION, LESS BLOATING

You will be less bloated, your digestion will improve, and you will absorb more nutrients from properly chewed food.

IT'S A TOOL YOU CAN USE ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

You can use slow, mindful eating in restaurants, at social events, while you travel or at home after a long day at work, anywhere really. You can practice it in any situation.

TIPS FOR STARTING SLOW AND MINDFUL EATING

While eating slowly and mindfully is simple and effective—it's not necessarily easy.

Mindful eating can seem a little overwhelming at first, but it really only takes one meal or snack a day to practice.

To start mindful eating, choose one meal a day that you focus on. Eat sitting down somewhere comfortable, set the table nicely, and eat without other distractions. This means not using your phone, not working while eating, and not watching anything on the TV.

Just sit and enjoy your meal, paying attention to each bite, from the flavor of the food to how it makes you feel. You can also focus on your thoughts at this time.

Try the tips below and experiment with them. Aim for a little bit better every time. Don't expect to do it perfectly the first time. If you have small children these tips may be more

challenging. If that's the case, focus on working toward them and bringing as much presence to your eating as you can.

SAY A QUICK BLESSING BEFORE YOU EAT

Before you start eating say a blessing. Thank the food you are going to eat for providing the nourishment and energy to reach your goals.

You can also say: I love my food and my food loves me back.

If you are eating a piece of cake thank it for being delicious and giving you joy, then eat it very slowly and enjoy every bite of it.

DO SOMETHING BETWEEN BITES

Before you eat, pause. Take one breath. Go one bite, and one breath (or three) at a time.

Between bites, try:

- putting down your utensils
- taking a sip of water
- talking with someone at the table

INCREASE THE TIME GRADUALLY

Life is busy, and having long leisurely meals may feel impossible. So start small. Add just one minute per meal, then two, then three...

You can also try an app like 20 Minute Eating.

NO DISTRACTIONS

A lot of times, it can become easy to overeat when you're distracted.

Foods are made to tempt the senses and be enjoyable, but when you take away the focus of eating and allow your hands to go into autopilot, that could be a path directly to mindless eating.

Don't eat while you drive, watch TV, or play with your phone. Sit at a table, not on your living room couch, and definitely not standing in front of the fridge. Some of the biggest binges happen standing in front of the kitchen cupboards.

Try to relax and experience your meal.

It will be difficult at the beginning but try to stick to this at least one meal a day.

SAVOR YOUR FOODS AND DRINKS

The next step to good mindful eating habits is to focus on the meal.

Focus on how your food looks, what it's made of, and notice things about what you're eating. This will cause you to slow down and have control over how much you eat during your meal.

As you learn to savor the taste of the food, rather than shoveling it in and swallowing as quickly as possible, you will have an enjoyable experience that allows your body to chew and digest your food sufficiently.

Enjoy what you eat. Taste it.

Is it salty? Sweet? What flavors can you recognize? What's the texture like?

Practice chewing slowly, sniffing, and savoring your food at every bite.

Play a game of trying to identify all the ingredients of the dishes that you are eating.

If you cooked the meal and you know the ingredients try the following game instead. Imagine that you need to write about this food in a food connoisseur magazine. How would you describe it? What would you write about it?

Savor your drinks too.

Is it coffee, tea, wine, or a refreshing smoothie?

Before you take your first sip, pause. Smell your drink. What does it smell like? Taste it. What flavors do you taste against your tongue? What is the temperature like? Notice how the cup or glass feels in your hand as you take another sip. Swallow slowly and concentrate on how your muscles contract as your liquid travels down your esophagus.

USE SMALLER UTENSILS

Use smaller forks, smaller spoons, or even chopsticks. This will help you eat smaller bites and slow down.

EAT FOODS THAT NEED TO BE REALLY CHEWED

Fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and proteins require more chewing than highly processed cakes, chips, white bread, ice cream, etc.

The more you have to chew, the longer it'll take you to eat, giving your fullness signals a chance to catch up.

Choose more foods that you need to chew.

COUNT YOUR CHEWS

Chew your food very well and see if you can increase the number of chews. Count your chews, turn it into a game.

“Chew your liquids. Drink your solids.” This is an old saying that means to enjoy your liquids so slowly as if you were eating/chewing them and to chew your solids until they are almost liquid.

Proper chewing not only slows down eating, but it also helps digestion, preventing digestive issues and making you less bloated.

Chewing breaks down the food into smaller pieces, mixes it with saliva, and increases the surface area of the food where the digestive enzymes can tackle it.

NOTICE WHAT AFFECTS YOUR EATING SPEED

Be a detective and try to figure out what affects your eating speed or focus.

Is it:

- who you eat with
- the time of the day
- the food you eat
- where you eat
- the music you hear (fast music makes you eat faster; listen to relaxing music during eating)?

Once you've made your observations, ask yourself: How could I change this situation? How could I improve my eating habits?

Find the slowest-eating person in your eating company and match their speed.

Every meal is a chance to practice.

WAIT 20 MINUTES BEFORE HAVING SECONDS

When it comes to eating seconds, a good rule to use is the 20 minutes rule. Science shows that it takes a few minutes for the brain to register that food has been eaten. If you have waited the full 20 minutes and you still feel hungry, you most likely are still hungry. If you got distracted and found some other ways to fill your time, then you might have wanted to eat for other reasons.

FOLLOW THE HABITS OF THE OKINAWANS

The Okinawans on the Ryukyu Islands in Japan are famous for having the longest life expectancy in the world.

HABIT 1

“Hara Hachi Bu”: Eat until you are 80% full.

Of course, there’s no way to know exactly when you are 80 % full, it’s only a guideline. Use the Hunger Scale I provided with the Food and Lifestyle Journal to be able to estimate. Eat until you are not hungry anymore, rather than until you are stuffed.

Use “Hara hachi bu” as your new mantra.

Sometimes it takes 15-20 meals until the stomach’s muscle memory wakes up and gets used to less food.

Many people’s hunger/satiety mechanism is broken. I understand this, as mine was as well at some point in my life. If we regularly eat much more or much less than our body needs this signal can’t work anymore.

If you tend to overeat, just try to eat a bit less than you usually do every time and after about 20 meals your stomach gets used to this amount and the hunger/satiety mechanism will start to work again.

HABIT 2

Eat healthy foods, mostly plants.

The Okinawans eat lots of vegetables (mostly green and yellow ones), whole grains, tofu, fish, and other legumes. They eat very little sugar, and very little meat, dairy, or eggs. I know this contradicts the popular low-carb diets. I’m not saying those don’t work for some people (I

believe that there is no one diet that fits all), but a mostly plant-based diet worked very well for the Okinawans (and for me too). (The younger generation of Okinawans has changed to a more Western lifestyle and has suffered for it.)

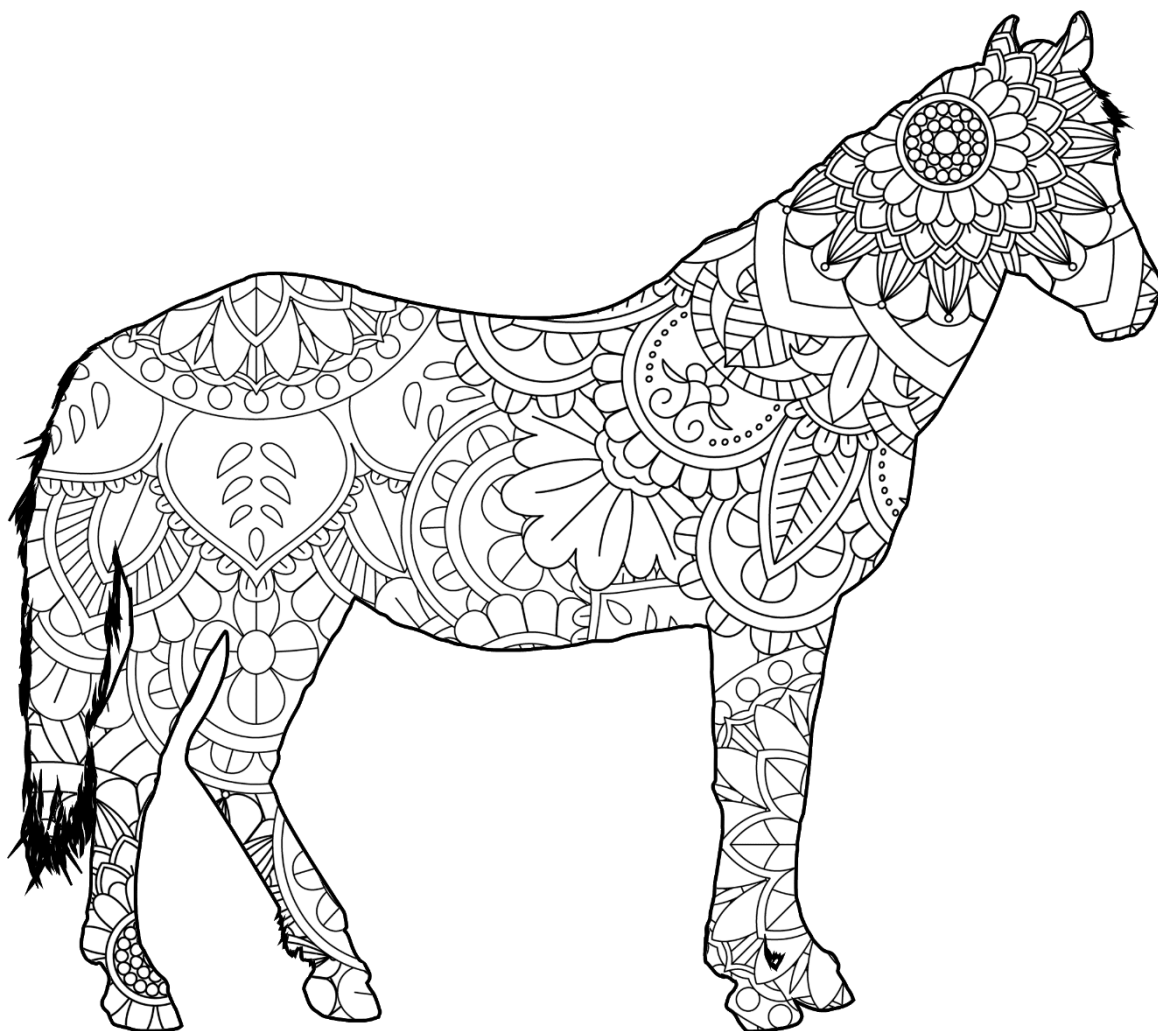
PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR THOUGHTS DURING SLOW, MINDFUL EATING

When you start practicing these new eating habits you might experience emotions and negative self-talk that you didn't pay attention to before.

For example, some may find that they watch TV during eating because eating alone makes them feel lonely. However, if eating in front of the TV results in overeating, it's better to deal with the feeling of loneliness using the tools we discussed in the limiting beliefs chapter.

Others may find that they feel guilty if they take the time for themselves and for eating slowly. They may feel that they need to be productive all the time, even when they eat, so they check their emails, read a book, or continue working on their computer during mealtimes too. I definitely belong to this category.

But we deserve to take time for ourselves. We are more productive if we take proper breaks regularly. Besides, if we eat mindlessly, we get less pleasure from eating, and then we crave more food to get enough pleasure from eating.



THE POWER OF PLEASURE AND SELF-CARE

“Life is too short for fake butter or fake people.” — Karen Salmansohn

As you continue through this process, you might begin to wonder whether you can still enjoy the foods you love, once you learn to stop overeating and emotional eating. You definitely can! **Actually, if you are afraid of enjoying your favorite foods because you might not be able to stop eating when you are full or you are anxious about gaining weight, this stress you create around food increases cortisol in your body.**

Cortisol is released when we are stressed and it suppresses functions that would be nonessential or detrimental in a fight-or-flight situation, including the digestive system. When a wild animal attacked us (which very rarely happens nowadays) we needed to concentrate on survival, so cortisol also desensitized us to pleasure.

The two main tasks of our brain are avoiding pain and seeking pleasure. Clearly, in a stressful situation avoiding pain is more important, so the pleasure-seeking part of our brain is switched off.

Now you can see that if we eat in a stressed state we not only impair our digestion, causing all kinds of digestive problems including bloating, but we also deprive ourselves of the pleasure we would get from the food.

This means we need to eat more to get the same amount of pleasure as we would've from eating in a relaxed state. To make things even worse, cortisol is a fat-storing hormone causing the formation of belly fat even on otherwise thin people.

So now you understand why a stressful life may make you gain weight. You are stressed and overworked all day. You don't have time to eat much during the day and even if you eat you do it fast and you get very little pleasure from it, if any. In the evening you go home ravenous and

you eat really fast to curb your hunger. However, you did not get the pleasure you were looking for so you keep eating the whole evening to release the stress you felt all day and to feel the pleasure your brain is seeking at the end of the day.

In the meantime, you might also be thinking that you shouldn't be eating this much and this makes you anxious during eating, which increases cortisol and again lowers the amount of pleasure you gain from the food.

This creates the self-fulfilling prophecy of not being able to stop eating and gaining weight, the very thing that made you stressed when you started eating. Crazy, right?

Have you noticed that when you are happy, relaxed, and have enough pleasure and joy in your life you don't think about food that much, and you even lose some weight? Think back to the time when you fell in love or were on a relaxing holiday. You were filled with happy, positive feelings and you were completely relaxed.

As Marc David says, "Pleasure is a powerful metabolizer that increases oxygenation and blood flow and decreases the production of cortisol and insulin, untimely helping to burn fat and build muscle."

Pleasure, or rather the lack of it, plays an important role in forming the overeating habit.

When we don't get enough pleasure from other areas of our life, we compensate for the missing joy with eating. Food may end up being our main source of happiness and

The138rised138. I believe in our need for pleasure of all kinds, including the enjoyment we get from food, but food shouldn't be our only source of pleasure and happiness.

Binge eating is also related to some kind of restriction, in your diet or in other areas of your life. If you binge eat regularly, you are most likely a perfectionist; you want to do everything perfectly and you also want to look perfect. You are the go-to person at work, always pleasing everyone, dieting, and exercising to look perfect (which is by the way impossible to achieve), but you don't take the time to relax and enjoy life. That's a waste of time, right? You feel guilty

when you are not productive or you take time for yourself. You need to do something (like reading a book or answering emails) even during eating.

Binge eating is the breaking point when your body can't take any more restrictions and the stress caused by these restrictions. It finally needs some pleasure!



THE IMPORTANCE OF REDUCING STRESS

Chronic stress causes not only emotional hunger but physical hunger too. The reason for physical hunger is the imbalance of ghrelin, leptin, and insulin hormones.

It's vitally important to reduce stress in your life.

We usually think about stress as something caused by work-related tension and relationship problems. But too much exercise, chronic and overly restrictive dieting, worries about body image, and sleep deprivation all put the body in a stressed state.

That's why in this section you will learn a few strategies to reduce stress, take care of yourself, and include more pleasure in your life.

If you are interested in a course or challenge dedicated to stress management sign up to a [waiting list](#) here.

STRESS RELIEF

When you are upset or angry about something, take a few deep breaths and ask these questions:

- Is this really important in the bigger picture of my life?
- Is it going to be important in 10 years; will I remember this at all?

Once you have calmed down ask yourself:

- What can I learn from this situation?
- What can I be grateful for about this?

KNOW WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

The Serenity Prayer above is used in the world of recovering from addiction.

When you take a slight step back and analyze the Serenity Prayer in chunks rather than as a whole, you'll realize just how inspirational this prayer really is. In fact, you can probably implement tiny aspects of this prayer into your daily life starting today!

- If you can make a change of some sort, then it's up to you to put in the time and effort to make that change.
- When the situation is completely out of your hands, you need to be able to be okay with that and let the problem pass by.

But, ultimately, you'll need to take the time to build the necessary insight to be able to determine whether you have a role in fixing the problem or not.

As much as you might hate to think about it, sometimes, in fact many times, things are just completely out of your control. In some cases, you might just have to leave the situation where it is and allow yourself to move on.

There's a lot of emotional and mental turmoil that can come with attempting to fix situations that you can't actually fix. Worrying about things you can't control also cause a lot of unnecessary stress. You might end up feeling like a failure or as if you're not good enough to repair the situation.

One example in today's times is the pandemic situation.

Things you can't control:

- How long it will take to get it under control
- How many people will be affected one way or another
- The number of deaths
- When businesses will re-open
- When you will go back to work
- When the shelter-in-place orders will be removed
- When you can go back to concerts, football games and other gatherings

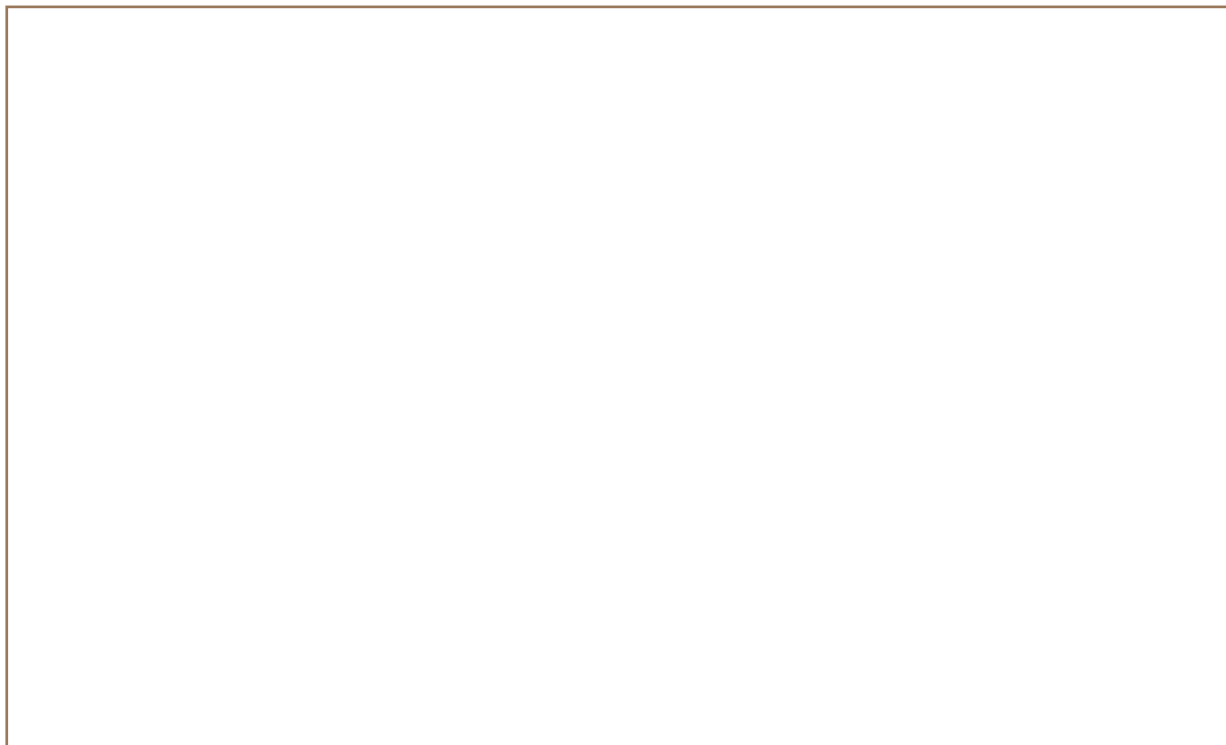
What you can control:

- What you do with your time while stuck at home
- How you protect yourself from infection
- How you concern yourself with protecting others from infection
- Your attitude and mindset
- How you deal with your emotions

With a little work and commitment, you can easily depend on the Serenity Prayer to help get you through some of the most difficult events in your life.

Doing so will alleviate a lot of unnecessary worry and overwhelm and consequently lower your stress levels exponentially.

What can and can't you control in your life?



MANAGE YOUR TIME TO DECREASE STRESS

Time management is by far the best way to relieve stress while still accomplishing your goals and completing all of your responsibilities. When you feel like you have control over your day and know how to balance your time, you will naturally feel more at peace with your life and will not be as overwhelmed.

Below are a few techniques to improve your time management skills.

THE 80-20 RULE

The 80-20 rule is also known as the Pareto Principle. The idea is that 80 percent of your results are based on 20 percent of your efforts. In other words, if you have a to-do list with 10 items that you need to complete, two of them will result in more than all of the other eight items combined. When you identify which items are the crucial 20% for your results, you will dedicate your time and effort much more efficiently and will see greater outcomes.

TAKE SMART BREAKS

When people think about productivity, they often focus on completing as many tasks as possible in a given time. However, studies have shown that taking smart breaks and allowing buffers in your schedule can actually allow for more productivity and efficiency. According to an article in Forbes magazine, breaks are shown to increase creativity, release stress and exhaustion, and restore goals.

CONTROL SOCIAL MEDIA USE

When you have all of your notifications on for each of your different social media platforms and they are constantly going off while you are trying to focus on a task, you would be The143rised by the amount of time and energy they take away. Even just looking at your phone for a second can totally distract you and take your train of thought away. Switch off the notification and you will be able to focus on your tasks much more effectively.

TO-DO LISTS

Making organized to-do lists is a great way to keep yourself accountable for the tasks you have to get done and make you feel productive as you check things off. In addition, writing everything

you have to do on a piece of paper allows your mind to focus on the task in front of you rather than trying to remember everything else that you have to do.

Write down the things you have to do and identify what is the most important and what you can save for later. Having an order of importance is a great way to feel rewarded at the end of the day as you completed the most valuable tasks. This will also reduce your urge to only get the small and easy tasks done and procrastinate on the more important things.

USE TIMERS

Timers are a great way to stay productive and efficient in a given time. For example, if you set a timer for a half an hour to complete a task and put your phone in another room, you will likely get a lot more done than if you are constantly surrounded by the distractions. Timers also provide a sense of reward as you have a break to look forward to while you are completing your tasks.

HAVE MORE JOY AND HAPPINESS IN YOUR LIFE

I want you to do something, other than eating, that gives you joy and happiness for at least 10 minutes every day. That's the minimum for those days when you are very busy. If you can, I urge you to carve out more time for your self-care practices.

These can be simple things like reading a book, drinking a cup of tea while watching the birds outside, listening to your favorite music, playing with your children or pets, painting your nails, painting a picture, watching a film, having a bath, meditating, doing yoga, going for a walk, cuddling, kissing, having sex, taking a nap or any other pleasurable experiences you can think of.

Or it can be something that needs a bit more preparation, such as a spa treatment, massage, sauna, having a coffee with friends, traveling, going to a concert, etc. Anything that relaxes you, calms you down, and gives you joy will work.

Walking is one of the healthiest things you can do and a leisurely walk, especially if it's done in nature, lowers cortisol.

Put these relaxation activities into your calendar and stick to them. Treat them like you would an important meeting. Make them happen.

Recovery is extremely important for mental and physical health. When you schedule these relaxation activities, your unconscious mind will not force you to take time out. Sometimes we eat because we just need a break from work, stress, and life in general; we want to release tension, zone out, not think, and just relax.

You must learn to chill out.

What pleasurable activities and relaxation exercises are you going to schedule for this week?

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

Use the Self-Care Tracker printable to plan and track your self-care activities.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU EXPERIENCED JOY?

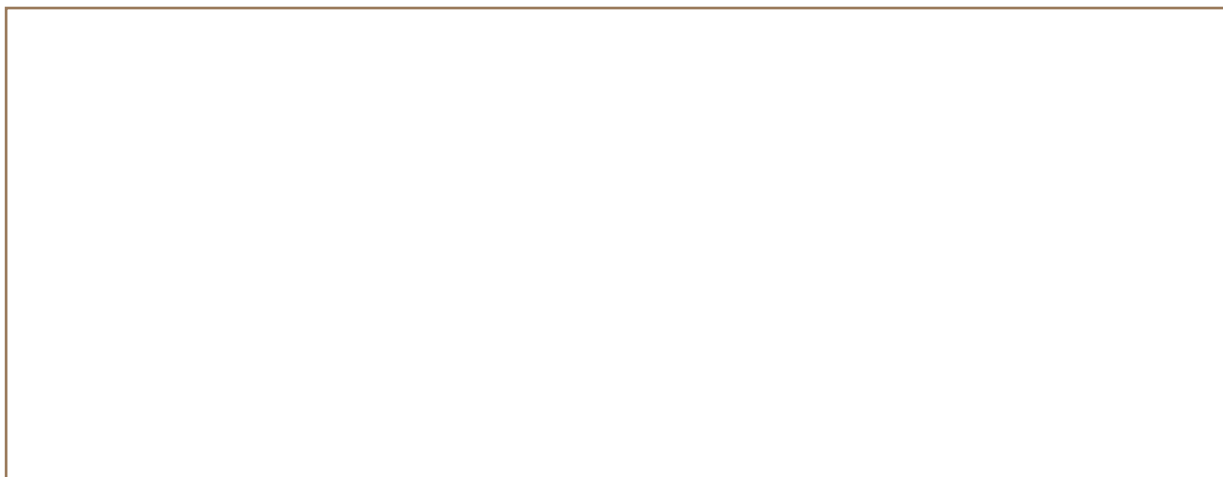
Most of us have moments where we feel happy. We look at our children and their laughter makes us smile. We go and enjoy a holiday with friends and family. Maybe we read a good book, watch a good film or have a date night with our spouse. However, when was the last time you experienced pure joy?

Pure joy is that feeling you felt as a child when you were anticipating opening the presents under the Christmas tree as you woke up on Christmas morning. It is the feeling you felt as a child when you were faced with what seemed to be the biggest ice cream you had ever seen. Do you remember feeling the excitement as you waited for the gates to open at a favorite theme park?

As we grow older, we lose the sense of pure joy that captivates a child's mind. We rarely let ourselves enjoy our activities with the reckless abandon we did as children. Perhaps the closest we come to that joy is the moment we gaze in awe at our newly born baby.

As adults, the responsibilities of our lives rob us of simple pleasures that give us joy. The experiences that shaped our personalities have their roots in our childhood and spending time reflecting on them is an excellent way to guide our thinking as we try to rediscover the inner self.

Write down 5 childhood memories that you remember gave you feelings of deep joy and excitement, both as you anticipated them, and later as you experienced them. Then take time to go and explore and relive these adventures.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin brown border, intended for the user to write down their childhood memories.

HOW TO LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

I also want you to take the time to enjoy your food and savor each bite. (You will learn more about how to do that in the Mindful Eating chapter.) Over time you will learn to enjoy the taste of the delicious food you are eating instead of scoffing it without even noticing the taste.

You should look forward to eating because you're hungry and the nourishing food you're about to eat looks and tastes amazing, and not eat to release stress. With time you will notice when a non-food source of pleasure will soothe you better than another bowl of ice cream or another glass of wine. You will learn to enjoy your food without the extra serving of guilt, shame, and regret and will start to recognize when your body has had enough food.

The truth is, your amazing, clever body knows what and how much to eat and how to move to be healthy and in good shape, but it can't do its best when it constantly needs to deal with stress. Pleasure helps you move away from stress towards relaxation.

When we were babies we intrinsically knew how much to eat but later we lost this ability for different reasons. Maybe we had to clean our plates during childhood, maybe we restricted our

food to lose weight and binged when we couldn't restrict anymore, or maybe we regularly ate too much to feel better. When you are in a relaxed state and listen to your body, it will start to give you the signals again.

The key is learning to get in tune with what your body needs and wants to feel great and be healthy.

Research shows that the body needs about 20 minutes to analyze the nutritional content of the food we eat. When it has received enough nourishment, it signals that it's full. When we eat too fast, we might eat too much before the body has a chance to notice that it has had enough nourishment already. Your stomach might be full but your brain still wants you to eat more because it has not registered the food you've already eaten yet.

Pay attention to how the food you eat makes you feel. Tune in to the feelings and emotions you feel before eating and how you feel after eating. Check how hungry you are before and after eating. All these little pieces of information will help you find the perfect diet for you that will keep you healthy, energetic, slim, and happy.

You can track all these in the **Food & Lifestyle Guide**. I created it specifically for this reason so you can find all your triggers for overeating and emotional eating.

You will see why you eat when you are not hungry; what happened before eating and how you felt (maybe someone made you angry or there was a stressful situation). You will see what kind of foods you ate when you couldn't stop eating. Maybe there is a trigger food for you that brings up memories or does not satiate you so you need to eat too much of it. You will see whether or not you slept enough and drank enough water. You will notice if you just ate because you were bored or frustrated.

Try using the journal for a few days and see what comes up for you.

Congratulations on finishing the workbook! You are amazing!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



I'm a Nutrition and Diet Advisor and Health Coach specializing in helping you break free from your food issues such as overeating, emotional eating, binge eating, food obsession, yo-yo dieting and body image issues, and develop a healthy relationship with food. If you already have a healthy relationship with food but have extra weight, I can help you lose it without dieting and developing the above issues.

If you liked the free chapter and would like to read the rest of the workbook, you can buy it here: <https://ritamayblog.com/how-to-stop-eating-your-feelings-workbook/>

If you want my personal undivided attention and/or you need accountability to actually do the exercises in the workbook instead of just reading it and then letting it collect digital dust, book a complimentary consultation [here](#) and let's have a virtual coffee or tea and a chat together. During this FREE call you'll tell me about your issue, and we'll map out a plan to help you get free from your issue. You'll get so much value from this call. If you can't find a suitable time in the calendar, send me an email at hello@ritamayblog.com.

There are three more ways I can help you:

- We can have laser- focused 30-minute calls or email support, for when you just want to clarify something you read in the book or you need help with a smaller issue.
- The second option is an initial 90-minute call to get you started. If you choose this option, we'll create a personalized strategy for you to follow, based on your unique circumstances. You'll get the workbook and additional video lessons too.
- The third option is a 2-month coaching package. If you decide to sign up, we'll meet weekly, and I'll guide you through the steps we mapped out during the first call. This package is highly personalized, I'll answer all your questions, and we'll focus on the areas that are most relevant for you. We'll keep in touch during the week via email too and I'll help you tackle all the mindset issues that usually arise during the process. These mindset hurdles are responsible for the many failed attempts when people try to do this on their own. Book a free call [here](#).

You can also find me here:

[Website](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Pinterest](#)

[Facebook](#)

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I look forward to speaking with you,

Rita May