
EMOTIONAL EATING WORKSHOP

Agenda for Emotional Eating Workshop

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The goal of this workshop:

*Promote appreciation, acceptance, and respect of your body.
Heal relationship with food. Becoming more at peace with your
body.*

It is NOT to lose weight, but it can become a side effect.

Answer the following questions to identify your current relationship with your body and food.

- When did you first learn your body was a problem?
- If you were at the weight you thought you should be, what would be different in your life?
- What are some of your rules about food/body?
- How are those working for you?

THE STRUGGLE WITH FOOD

Our lives are centered around food:

- Meeting friends for lunch
- Come over for dinner
- I'll bring a dessert
- Birthdays
- Ice cream stores
- Cookouts/ BBQs
- Thanksgiving dinner
- Christmas cookies

Our society values thinness. In fact, it is the ideal. Diet culture teaches us, from a very young age, that “skinny” is right, and “fat” is wrong and *shameful*.

We are heavily influenced by what the media portrays as attractive. For women, it is thinness and for men it is being muscular.

CUES

The reality is that we are born knowing when to eat and when to stop. Babies will signal to their caregiver that they are hungry, and they turn their head away when they are full. However, as we get older and are exposed to diet culture, we stop listening to our body's internal signals.

We eat despite not feeling physically hungry due to emotional and external factors.

Emotional eating. This is the act of eating in response to certain emotions.

- Numbness
- Comfort
- Filling a void
- Stress/anxiety
- Sadness

External eating. This occurs when you eat in response to environmental stimuli

- Smell of food
- Picture of food

DIET CULTURE/RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD AND THE BODY

What is a diet? Anytime a person manipulates food for the purpose of weight loss, they are on a diet.

The pink elephant metaphor: If I tell you not to think of a pink elephant, what are you most likely to think of? Similarly, the more we expect ourselves not to think about or eat certain foods, we tend to crave them more.

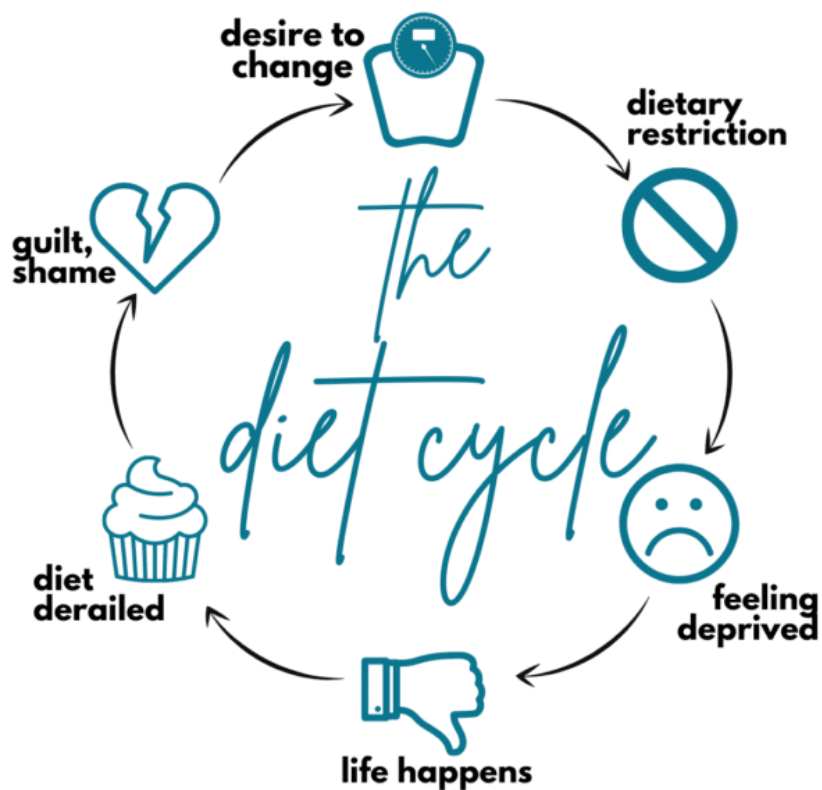
What we're told works, really doesn't. 95% of people gain the weight back and 33% of people gain even more weight after the diet.

It is not only external factors outside of the home, but in the home as well. We tend to model this to our children, whether it be comments about ourselves or about them. Our children are always watching and listening to us. And therefore, we set the stage for their relationship with food.

In a large study of 14 and 15-year-olds, dieting was the most important predictor of a developing eating disorder.

Instead of exercising because we want to take care of our bodies/because we love our bodies/to keep ourselves healthy, we want to get thinner and smaller.

You learned all of this without your permission. It's not your fault, but it is your responsibility to unlearn.



To over-compensate for “getting off track”, we fall into these maladaptive behaviors, such as:

- Skipping meals
- Over-exercising
- Eliminating food groups
- Disconnected from hunger/fullness
- Eating to discomfort
- Rigidity
- Guilt

PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

One way we can change our relationship with food and unlearn the diet mentality is through building psychological flexibility. There are 6 core components of psychological flexibility.

Be Present: live in the now, make intentional deliberate choices, flexibly aware of thoughts, emotions, behaviors

Values: Tuning in to what matters most

Acceptance: Be courageous, willing and open



Perspective Taking: transcend yourself, connect with a greater whole; Take in the view

Cognitive Defusion: notice your internal chatter and step back from your thoughts; Get space from the “newsfeed”

Committed Action: taking action in the direction of your values, even in the face of obstacles

Be Present: Be present in your body as well as to your surroundings. It involves noticing, observing, and being aware.

Embodied Eating is eating with full and complete awareness about your internal/hunger cues as well as your surroundings and appreciation for the process by which the food got to your plate.

One eye in (Internal Cues) 	One eye out (External Cues) 
Appetite awareness -how hungry on a scale of 0-10	Food awareness
Eating awareness -eating without distractions -how the food feels in body	Ecosystem awareness

Values: being thin is NOT a value. Values are your personal qualities (i.e. generosity, compassion, helpfulness, etc.) you want to live by as well as the aspects of our life that are important (i.e. family, friends, career, recreation, etc.).

Here are some questions to ask yourself to help you identify your values:

- What is important to you? What are you missing? What kind of things can you point out around you that you care about? If you liked how you looked, what would you do different that you are not doing now?

Acceptance: Allowing unwanted internal experiences; Welcoming the unwelcome; Making space for your full experience; Getting curious.

You can accept and be grateful for your body without even liking it right now. Experiential avoidance is turning away from something that is painful or uncomfortable/unwanted. Acceptance is the exit ramp of the roundabout of experiential avoidance.

Cognitive Defusion: Our tendency to get hooked by unhelpful thoughts such as Self-Criticism, Comparisons, Judgments, Shoulds, Rules, Being Right

You don't need to get rid of or change body image and food thoughts. Unhook from them.

It is important to remember that you are not your thoughts. You can simply reframe your thoughts from "I am fat" to "I'm having a thought that I am fat". This creates some distance between you and your thoughts rather than identifying with your thoughts.

Perspective Taking: You are more than the stories your mind creates.

Committed action: Choosing the meaningful moments in alignment with our values. Take small, manageable steps. Look for actions, not outcomes.

Attuned Eating

- Dan Siegel

We can use the components of psychological flexibility to eat in an attuned way. Attuned eating is the antidote to dieting and is about developing flexibility with our eating and learning to tune into our body's hunger cues to let us know when to eat and when to stop eating.

Dieting= rigidity

Binging= chaos

Attuned eating= integration

There are three steps to attuned eating. We can use the acronym "AIM" to remember them.

AIM

ATTUNEMENT

How do you know when you are hungry? Feeling empty, growling, tight, achy, dizzy, lightheaded, tired, difficulty concentrating, nausea.

What are you hungry for right now?

When we use the bathroom- we try not to wait until "it's time" to use the bathroom. We don't go to the bathroom when we don't need to go.

Hunger is also a bodily response. It is normal and nothing to fear. So why do we wait or overindulge?



We NEVER want to get to a 0 or a 10.

Start eating when you are at a 3-4 and stop eating at a 6.

INTENTION

How do you want to feel when you're done eating?

Slow down while eating and allow time for your stomach to send signals to your brain about your fullness. If you end up eating more than you intended, then learn from the experience and you can be more intentional next time.

MINDFULNESS

Being fully present during the experience of eating without judgment. Slow down and notice how the food smells, the colors, shapes, textures, and how our body feels as we eat it. Ideally, mindful eating is eating at a table without distraction.

What interferes with mindful eating?

- TV/phones
- Stress
- Busy life
- Work

6 Ways to Practice Mindful Eating

mindful
mindful.org

Mindless Eating

- 1 Eating past full and ignoring your body's signals
- 2 Eating when emotions tell us to eat (i.e., sad, bored, lonely)
- 3 Eating alone, at random times and places
- 4 Eating foods that are emotionally comforting
- 5 Eating and multitasking
- 6 Considering a meal an end product

Mindful Eating

- Listening to your body and stopping when full
- Eating when our bodies tell us to eat (i.e., stomach growling, energy low)
- Eating with others, at set times and places
- Eating foods that are nutritionally healthy
- When eating, just eating
- Considering where food comes from

List created by Christopher Willard PsyD

10 PRINCIPLES TO INTUITIVE EATING (Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch, 1995)

- **Reject the diet mentality** - Throw out the diet books and magazine articles that offer you false hope of losing weight quickly, easily, and permanently.
- **Honor your hunger** - Keep your body biologically fed with adequate energy and carbohydrates. Otherwise you can trigger a primal drive to overeat.
- **Make Peace with Food** - Give yourself unconditional permission to eat. If you tell yourself that you can't or shouldn't have a particular food, it can lead to intense feelings of deprivation that build into uncontrollable cravings and, often, bingeing. When you finally "give-in" to your forbidden food, eating will be experienced with such intensity, it usually results in Last Supper overeating, and overwhelming guilt.

- **Challenge the Food Police** - Scream a loud "NO" to thoughts in your head that declare you're "good" for eating under 1000 calories or "bad" because you ate a piece of chocolate cake.
- **Respect your Fullness** – Resign for the “clean your plate” club. It’s a waste either way: whether it goes in your body or the trash. Listen for the body signals that tell you that you are no longer hungry. Observe the signs that show that you're comfortably full. Pause in the middle of a meal or food and ask yourself how the food tastes, and what is your current fullness level?
- **Discover the Satisfaction Factor** - When you eat what you really want, in an environment that is inviting and conducive, the pleasure you derive will be a powerful force in helping you feel satisfied and content. By providing this experience for yourself, you will find that it takes much less food to decide you've had "enough".
- **Honor your Feelings without Using Food** - Find ways to comfort, nurture, distract, and resolve your issues without using food. Anxiety, loneliness, boredom, anger are emotions we all experience throughout life. Each has its own trigger, and each has its own appeasement. Food won't fix any of these feelings. It may comfort for the short term, distract from the pain, or even numb you into a food hangover. But food won't solve the problem. If anything, eating for an emotional hunger will only make you feel worse in the long run. You'll ultimately have to deal with the source of the emotion, as well as the discomfort of overeating.
- **Respect your Body** - Accept your genetic blueprint. Just as a person with a shoe size of eight would not expect to realistically squeeze into a size six, it is equally as futile (and uncomfortable) to have the same expectation with body size. But mostly, respect your body, so you can feel better about who you are.
- **Exercise—Feel the Difference** - Forget militant exercise. Just get active and feel the difference. Shift your focus to how it feels to move your body, rather than the calorie burning effect of exercise. If you focus on how you feel from working out, such as energized, it can make the difference between rolling out of bed for a brisk morning walk or hitting the snooze alarm.
- **Honor your Health** - Gentle Nutrition Make food choices that honor your health and taste buds while making you feel well. Remember that you don't have to eat a perfect diet to be healthy. You will not suddenly get a nutrient deficiency or gain weight from one snack, one meal, or one day of eating. It's what you eat consistently over time that matters, progress not perfection is what counts.

SHAME TO SELF-COMPASSION

- When I think about letting go of dieting behaviors I...
- The most exciting aspect of attuned eating is...
- The biggest challenge to becoming an attuned eater is...

How we talk to ourselves can either perpetuate or break the diet mentality, help us to change our relationship with food, and work towards building acceptance of our bodies.

Below are some reasons to exercise that are not related to losing weight. Choose the reasons that are most important to you and create your own list to use as motivation to move your body more throughout the day.

50 REASONS *to* EXERCISE

by Neila Rey | neilarey.com

01. Lifts your mood
02. Improves learning abilities
03. Builds self-esteem
04. Keeps your brain fit
05. Keeps your body fit & able
06. Boosts mental health
07. Boosts your immune system
08. Reduces stress
09. Makes you feel happier
10. Has anti-ageing effects
11. Improves skin tone & colour
12. Improves sleeping patterns
13. Helps prevent strokes
14. Improves joint function
15. Improves muscle strength
16. Alleviates anxiety
17. Sharpens memory
18. Helps to control addictions
19. Boosts productivity
20. Boosts creative thinking
21. Improves body image
22. Gives you confidence
23. Helps you keep focused in life
24. Improves eating habits
25. Increases longevity
26. Strengthens your bones
27. Strengthens your heart
28. Improves posture
29. Prevents colds
30. Improves appetite
31. Improves cholesterol levels
32. Lowers risk of (certain) cancers
33. Lowers high blood pressure
34. Lowers risk of diabetes
35. Fights dementia
36. Eases back pain
37. Decreases osteoporosis risk
38. Reduces feelings of depression
39. Prevents muscle loss
40. Increases energy and endurance
41. Increases sports performance
42. Increases pain resistance
43. Improves balance & coordination
44. Improves oxygen supply to cells
45. Improves concentration
46. Helps with self-control
47. Lessens fatigue
48. Increases sex drive & satisfaction
49. Makes life more exciting
50. Improves Quality of Life

SHAME

Shame thrives on secrecy, silence, and judgment. People might experience some shame related to our bodies and our decisions related to food.

- "I was bad today."

Sometimes, people may base their worth on their weight or outward appearance.

- "I've let myself go"
- "I am not enough."

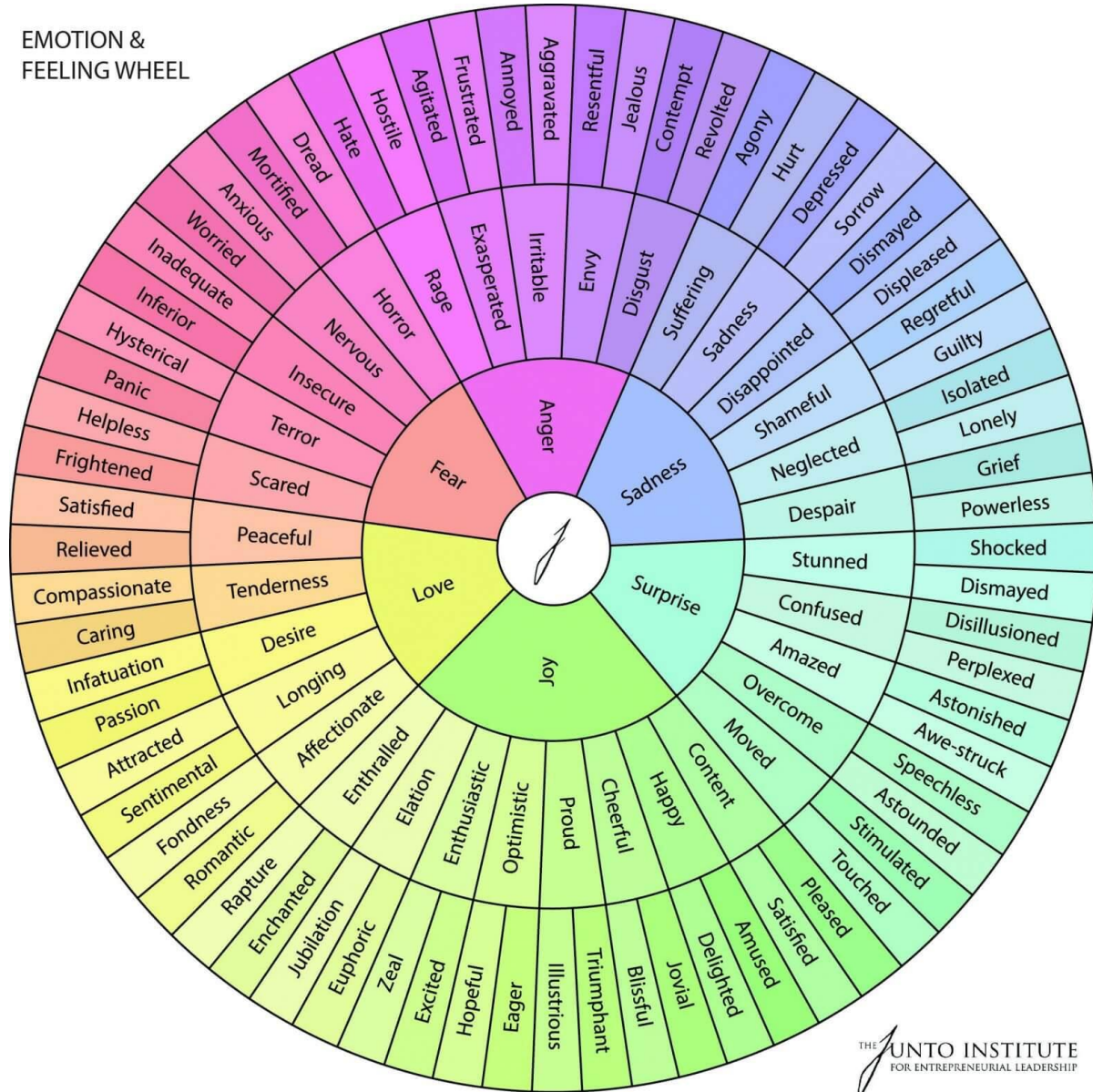
Furthermore, people may have unrealistic expectations of the emotions they will feel if they were thin.

- "When I lose weight, then I'll be happy."
- "If I was thin, all of these negative feelings would go away."

SELF-COMPASSION

If you are reaching for food and not hungry, something must be bothering you. What would you be thinking about or feeling if you weren't eating right now? Name the feeling. You have permission to step away from feelings. But do it in an intentional way: taking a walk, watching a funny show, etc.

EMOTION & FEELING WHEEL



Build awareness to connect to self and to others. Accept, appreciate, and respect body. The body is an instrument, not an ornament. Our bodies carry us and work for us. Having gratitude toward the body is so important. What is one good thing your body has done for you today?

EXERCISES

You may experiment writing down or acknowledging 24 hours of “bad body” thoughts to see what arises.

Computer exercise: write down/type a negative thought about your body. Picture yourself pressing the backspace button until you are left with a clean white paper again. Now type in a thought that shows both compassion and gratitude for your body.

WHEN TO SEEK MORE HELP

- If you are restricting your food to the point you feel sick
- If you are actively trying to vomit after eating
- If you are losing a lot of weight in a short amount of time

Eating Recovery Center of Cincinnati

(513) 808-9220

Linder Center of Hope

513-536-4673

Resources

Recovery Record app

Diet Survivor's Handbook- Judith Matz

The Body Positivity Card Deck- Judith Matz

More Than a Body: Your Body is an Instrument, Not an Ornament- Lexie and Lindsay Kite

The Body is Not an Apology- Sonya Renee Taylor