

UNCONSCIOUS EATER

Unconscious eating means you are not truly engaged while you are eating because you are distracted with other things or you are eating food ‘just because it’s there’. You’re not truly aware of how much or even what you’re eating over the course of the day. You might typically miss meals, eat while doing other things, or just graze on food throughout the day.

GOAL:
*Develop
self-awareness
of the eating
experience.*

TUNE IN TO YOUR PHYSICAL HUNGER CUES

Welcome your hunger

If you’ve tried lots of diets in the past, you may have lost touch with your sense of physical hunger. You might have forgotten what it feels like to feel hungry or you might have taught yourself to ignore typical signals that your body needs food, like:

- » A growling or gurgling stomach.
- » A slight headache.
- » An empty feeling in the pit of your stomach.
- » A light dizziness.
- » A little fatigue.

Before your next meal or snack notice how you are feeling physically.

What symptoms tell you that you are hungry, and how often do they occur?

Most people who eat on a regular basis experience hunger and eat in response to it every few hours. If you ignore your signals and wait too long to eat, your hunger may surge, your energy may plunge and you’ll be at risk of eating more food than you need.

Remember, hunger is not an ‘on’ or an ‘off’ switch, but a gauge. Learn to rate both your hunger and satisfaction with the following exercise.

Gauge your hunger & satisfaction

Before a meal or snack, on a scale of 1-5, rate your hunger:



At most meals, aim to eat when you're at a '3', so you're more likely to respond by eating in a moderate way.

After a meal or snack, on a scale of 1-5, rate your satisfaction:



The goal is to stop at a '3' – when you have that 'just right' feeling when you've had enough, but not too much to eat.

Gauge your hunger before and after each meal and snack and record it on your menu.

MANAGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

While you're learning to tune in to your hunger and satisfaction cues, it can be helpful to set up the environment to be more supportive of your efforts.

How to manage environmental cues:

- ✓ Choose a designated eating place
- ✓ Avoid eating at your desk, over the sink, standing at the bench or in front of the TV
- ✓ If you have to eat at your desk, turn away from your computer
- ✓ Put your phone on silent during meal times and don't have it on the table
- ✓ Serve individual plates, rather than large platters. Keep serving dishes in the kitchen
- ✓ Make smaller portions appear larger by serving them on smaller plates
- ✓ Store food in opaque containers to reduce visual temptation
- ✓ Move foods from the table or bench to the cupboard
- ✓ Keep healthy favourites like vegetables and fruits in the most prominent position in the refrigerator

EATING WITH AWARENESS

Tuning into your physical hunger cues and gauging your satisfaction is an important part of eating with awareness. Slowing down the pace of your eating and truly enjoying your food is an equally important component of eating with awareness. When you do this, you may find you are satisfied with less food.

A useful exercise is to re-learn the 'joy' of eating by practicing mindful eating.

1. Take a breath
2. Take a sip of water
3. Appreciate the beauty of the food
4. Take a single bite
5. Chew slowly
6. Notice the flavour and the texture
7. Swallow slowly before your next bite
8. Pause mid-meal to check your appetite
9. Listen to your hunger and satisfaction signals
10. Stop when you are satisfied

*Remember that
mindfulness
is the key to
satisfaction.*