

Less Is More

What a hornet's nest nutrition is. How to possibly navigate the endless stream of contradictory studies, conflicting advice, and confusing data?

This much we know for sure: the more we eat, the fatter we get, the more energy we expend, and the less healthy we become. And we are undeniably eating more.

Much as the ethic of more, bigger, faster dominates the workplace, so it has come to define the way we eat—with similar costs to our productivity and sustainability. Many of the foods that fuel us in the short term exact a damaging toll over time.

Consider this: Between 1960 and 2000, the average weight of American men between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-nine jumped from 163 to 191 pounds. During the same period, the average woman went from 140 to 164. That's a heavy burden we're carrying around.

Body mass index (BMI) is the standard measure for determining whether we are overweight or obese. A BMI between 18 and 25 is considered normal. A BMI above 25 is overweight, and above 30 is obese. On the one hand, the body mass index is a crude, inexact measurement that fails to sufficiently account for differences in gender, body type, and percentage of body fat versus lean muscle mass. Based on the BMI, for example, most professional basketball players would be considered overweight or obese, which is hardly the case. For the vast majority of us, however, a BMI over 30—say, a woman five feet, five inches tall weighing 180 pounds or a man five feet, ten inches tall at 210 pounds—would translate as obese.

In response to similar increases around the globe, the World Health Organization coined the term “globesity” in 1998 to describe what they concluded is a global epidemic. During the past decade, it has only gotten worse. More than 550 million people around the

world are now considered obese, while another 1.6 billion are overweight. In the United States, one-third of Americans are overweight, and another one-third are obese—the highest rates in the developed world. But even in countries with traditionally slim populations, the numbers have risen dramatically. In France, for example, the percentage of those who are overweight has increased by 50 percent during the past decade and is now 42 percent, including 12 percent who are obese.

Obesity is close to overtaking smoking as the most preventable cause of death and today accounts for more than 100,000 deaths a year. In a National Cancer Institute study of more than a half-million Americans, an obese fifty-year-old was more than twice as likely to die as a fifty-year-old at a normal weight, controlling for other risk factors. Even a slightly overweight fifty-year-old ran a 20 to 40 percent higher risk of dying prematurely. Being overweight or obese also puts us at far greater risk of developing chronic diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, several forms of cancer, and diabetes, the disease most clearly associated with weight gain.

For every pound of excess weight, the risk of developing diabetes increases by 4 percent. The incidence of type 2, or adult-onset, diabetes has doubled during the past thirty years and is expected to nearly double again by 2025. Equally striking, the disease is almost completely preventable simply through lifestyle changes. A National Institutes of Health study of more than 3,000 adults at high risk for type 2 diabetes found that their likelihood of developing the disease could be reduced by nearly 60 percent simply through a program aimed at modest weight loss—5 to 7 percent—and thirty minutes of exercise five days a week. For employers, the expense associated with the overweight and the obese—an estimated \$150 billion a year—shows up not just in the form of higher health insurance premiums but also in absenteeism and disability claims, as well as in more indirect ways, such as lower energy and stamina and a significantly higher incidence of depression.

The immediate influence of the food we eat is on our energy levels. Along with oxygen, food is our most essential form of fuel, but many of us struggle to eat in a way that is at once healthy, energizing, and pleasurable. Instead, we're constantly skittering between one or an-

other of those goals, often in the course of a single day, without ever feeling we're getting the sustenance and satisfaction we're seeking.

From an energy perspective, the key to nutrition is maintaining a stable, steady level of blood sugar. Food is our primary source of glucose, and it fuels our brains and the rest of the cells in our body. When our blood glucose levels spike too high or drop too low for too long, we function less efficiently, and eventually we become sick. Insulin is the hormone that regulates our blood sugar, both by helping it get into our cells and by removing excess amounts of it from our blood. Chronically high blood sugar levels are referred to as hyperglycemia. When we're unable to produce insulin at all, the result is type 1 or juvenile-onset diabetes. The treatment is to inject insulin directly into the bloodstream at regular intervals every day and to monitor blood sugar levels closely. When we eat too many foods high in sugar, our blood glucose levels rise and insulin eventually becomes less efficient at taking up excess amounts in the blood. The result can be type 2 diabetes. The American Heart Association now recommends that women consume no more than six teaspoons or 100 calories of refined sugar a day and men no more than nine teaspoons or 150 calories.

By contrast, when our blood sugar levels are too low—after a long period of not eating—we experience hypoglycemia and its accompanying symptoms, including lethargy, unsteadiness, distractibility, irritability, and even fainting. All foods influence our blood sugar levels, but they do so at different speeds, for varying durations and at greater or lesser cost to our health and alertness. The good news is that we have the power to regulate and stabilize our blood glucose levels and therefore our energy levels and our long-term health. The key is not just the food we choose to eat but also how much of it we consume and at what intervals.

THE SUMO WRESTLER DIET

The first problem many of our clients have, fueled by the rising demands in their lives, is that they often go for long periods without eating at all. The result is that their blood glucose levels drop, and so does their alertness as the day wears on. By the time they finally get around to eating—often not until lunch, sometimes not until dinner—they’re feeling famished. At that point, they end up eating much more than their bodies need. It’s a yo-yo effect, in which they find themselves feeling either hungry or stuffed but rarely just well fed and satisfied. We refer to this as the sumo wrestler diet, because in order to gain as much weight as possible, these huge 600-pound athletes have discovered it is best to skip breakfast, never eat before noon, consume one or two meals at most—always huge ones—and sleep immediately after eating in order to increase their fat storage.

But we’re not sumo wrestlers, and what we’re after is a steady source of energy all day long. Breakfast is especially critical to regulating our blood sugar levels because it typically follows the longest period we go at any one time without eating. Metabolism is the rate at which we burn calories, and eating breakfast stokes it and also gives us energy for the day ahead.

The best studies of the consequences of skipping breakfast have been conducted among children, but the same principles apply to all of us. Hunger at any time has been shown to reduce a child’s ability to pay attention, absorb information, and respond appropriately to the environment. Sound familiar? In a study titled “Energizing the Classroom,” conducted among elementary school children in a Minnesota school district, those who were provided a free breakfast demonstrated better attention in class, fewer behavior problems, and increases in math and reading scores. In a second study, children who ate breakfast evidenced better speed and accuracy in retrieving information, made fewer errors on standardized achievement tests, and exhibited increased vigilance on tasks. We should never allow ourselves to get too hungry, not just because it makes us less effective but also because it makes us more likely to eventually eat too much.

The Hunger Scale makes this easy to visualize:

THE HUNGER SCALE

10. Feel sick; hate the thought of food; post-Thanksgiving dinner.
9. Stuffed; headaches, lethargy, ready to sleep.
8. Uncomfortable; bloated; change into sweats.
7. Sluggish; ate too much; loosen belt, unbutton pants.
6. Full; but still have room for a good dessert.
5. Satisfied; don't feel food in stomach; lasts two to three hours.
4. Mildly hungry; stomach is beginning to stir.
3. Hungry; stomach growling, light-headed.
2. Famished; irritable, nauseated, preoccupied.
1. Beyond hungry: so hungry you aren't hungry anymore.

The aim should be to always operate between 4 and 6—a gentle wave—so that you eat when you begin to feel hungry but never so much that you feel stuffed. For many of our clients, this requires reawakening an awareness of what the stirrings of hunger feel like *before* they're overwhelming. It's well documented and scarcely surprising that the hungrier we are, the more we eat. The prescription that best serves sustainable energy is to eat something at least every three hours, which effectively means five to six times a day. It's the equivalent of intermittently adding logs to a fire, but not so many at any one time that the fire gets snuffed out. A series of researchers have found that subjects who eat small portions frequently, rather than just two or three meals a day, experienced benefits including lower appetite and fewer overall calories consumed, better insulin sensitivity, lower body fat percentages and even higher energy levels.

Mark Fields is the president of the Americas for the Ford Motor Company, where we've done our work for a number of years. It's difficult to overstate the demands of Fields' job during a period when Ford was struggling mightily for its survival. He works long hours, not least because his family lives in Florida, to which he commutes over the weekend. During the week, he lives alone in Detroit. When we

first met Fields, his eating habits weren't much different from those of many of our clients.

Fields was accustomed to waking up very early each morning, around 5 A.M. He didn't feel especially hungry at that hour, so he skipped breakfast altogether and usually arrived at the office before 7 A.M. Mornings typically consisted of one meeting after another, and his only sustenance was a large cup of coffee, sometimes two. At noon he ate lunch, which consisted of either a salad or a sandwich. Fields rarely ate anything during the afternoon, even as his energy began to flag. When he arrived home, his favorite indulgence was M&M's, after which he typically ate his biggest meal of the day. Like so many of our clients, he had only two eating gears: all or nothing.

The problem, from an energy perspective, is that Fields was underfueling himself throughout the day, when he needed the most energy, and overfueling himself at night, when he least needed energy. One of the first changes we had him make was to eat a high-energy breakfast every day—in his case a whey protein drink mixed with skim milk and fruit. He also began eating a small snack at midmorning and a second one in the midafternoon. Almost immediately, he noticed a significant improvement in his energy levels. In the morning, he felt less need for coffee to keep him fueled, and in the afternoon, the combination of a snack and his new ritual of taking a fifteen-minute walk outdoors gave him an energy lift for the last several hours of his workday. When he got home, he no longer felt intensely hungry. He was able to give up the M&M's altogether, and he ate a smaller dinner.

Within several weeks, Fields shifted from eating two meals a day to eating five separate times. On its face, that sounds like a great formula for gaining weight. He didn't, nor do the vast majority of our clients. One factor may be that eating more frequently keeps our metabolism high and therefore burning calories more efficiently. The more significant reason is that Fields ate less at any given meal. We ordinarily suggest a breakfast of 300 to 400 calories and a midmorning and midafternoon snack of no more than 150 calories. In practical terms, that could mean anything from an apple to a small handful of nuts to a cup of low-fat yogurt.

PORTION DISTORTION

It's obviously easier to eat less at primary meals if you've had small snacks in between. But easier doesn't mean easy. The world we live in is forever encouraging us to eat more, bigger, faster. Part of our challenge is the extraordinary increase in the portion sizes at restaurants and in supermarkets. "People eat in units," the dietician Lisa Young writes in *The Portion Teller*. "Whatever the unit is, most people will eat the entire unit, no matter how big or small."

Consider the beloved bagel. Its average size has doubled since 1960. Today, it typically has the same number of calories as five pieces of bread. The same doubling, tripling, and even quadrupling in size applies to the hamburgers, fries, and sodas you buy at McDonald's or Burger King; the package of trail mix or candy you grab off the shelf at an airport newsstand; the muffin you buy with your grande latte at Starbucks; the bottomless pasta bowl at Olive Garden; or the glass of wine you sip at your local bar.

It can also be shocking to discover how many calories there are even in what appears to be very small amounts of food. A handful of nuts the size of a golf ball is 200 calories. A three-ounce hamburger—the size of a deck of cards and smaller than we ordinarily eat—is nearly 400 calories. A shot glass of most salad dressings is 150 calories.

Part of the problem is that we're frequently unaware of how much we're eating, not least because we eat it so fast. Numerous experiments have shown that it takes twenty minutes for our brains and our bodies to recognize that we're full, but we often consume our meals on the run in considerably less than that. The average time we spend eating lunch alone at a fast-food restaurant is eleven minutes, less if we're on the run. At a cafeteria in the workplace, the average is twenty-three minutes. Even at a moderately priced sit-down restaurant, it's only twenty-eight minutes. More often than not, we're doing other things when we eat alone—working at a computer, watching television, reading a book, talking on the phone—all of which distract us from noticing how much we're consuming.

A second issue, argues Brian Wansink, a professor of nutritional science at Cornell, is that our stomachs have effectively developed just three settings. The first, he says, is "I'm starving," the second is "I'm

stuffed,” and the third is “I’m full, but I can still eat more.” It’s the last, he believes, that gets us into the most trouble. Our body sends us one signal and our minds override it. The classic example is eating a huge meal, feeling completely full, and then being offered a tempting dessert. Almost magically, we discover room in our bloated stomachs for more.

“Everyone—every single one of us—eats how much we eat largely because of what’s around us,” Wansink writes in *Mindless Eating*. “We overeat not because of hunger but because of family and friends, packages and plates, names and numbers, labels and lights, colors and candles, shapes and smells, distractions and distances, cupboards and containers. This list is almost as endless as it’s invisible.”

Wansink runs something called the Food and Brand Lab at Cornell University, where he and his colleagues have done a series of clever studies to demonstrate just how oblivious we are to how much we eat. In one study, they gave a group of moviegoers free buckets of either a medium-size or a large-size bucket of popcorn on entering the theater. The subjects weren’t told that the popcorn was actually five days old, tasted like Styrofoam, and was so stale that it squeaked when it was eaten. At the end of the movie, the subjects were asked to return their buckets to the researchers and then respond to a brief survey. Here was one of the questions for the big-bucket eaters:

Some people tonight were given medium-size buckets of popcorn, and others, like yourself, were given these large-size buckets. We have found that the average person who is given a large-size container eats more than if they are given a medium-size container. Do you think you ate more because you had the large size?

The majority of respondents confidently said they had not. In fact, the big-bucket group had eaten an average 53 percent more, which was the equivalent of 21 more handfuls, or an extra 173 calories, of *stale* popcorn. They kept eating and eating, Wansink concluded, not because the popcorn tasted good or even because they were hungry. Many had just eaten lunch. Instead, they were responding reflexively to a series of “hidden persuaders” or unconscious cues, including the expectation of eating popcorn in a movie theater, the distraction of

the movie itself, and the sound of others eating the same squeaky, stale popcorn.

In another study, Wansink found that five minutes after leaving dinner at an Italian restaurant, the diners, who had been secretly observed while eating, couldn't accurately recall how much bread they'd eaten. On average, they estimated eating 28 percent less than they actually ate. Twelve percent of those who had eaten bread denied they'd had any at all. Even the size of the plates we use can have a dramatic impact on how much we eat. When Wansink gave subjects large bowls for ice cream, they dished out at least 30 percent more for themselves than those who were given smaller bowls. When he gave those with larger bowls a large scooper to dish out the ice cream, they dished out 57 percent more than those given smaller scoopers and smaller bowls.

In an even more elaborate experiment, Wansink and his collaborators designed a system that made it possible to secretly and continuously refill bowls of soup on a table by way of a rubber tube that came up through a hole drilled in the table and then through the bottom of the soup bowl. Subjects were seated at tables for four and invited in to sample free soup. Two people at each table received ordinary 18-ounce bowls of soup. The other two had 18-ounce bowls that continually refilled as they ate, but not to the top, so they would continue to believe they were making progress. To distract the group from what they were eating, the researchers generated a discussion about their summer plans.

After twenty minutes, the students were instructed to stop eating and asked to estimate how many calories they'd consumed. Interestingly, both groups estimated an average of about 125 calories. In reality, the group given a fixed amount of soup had consumed an average of 155 calories. The group with the constantly refilling bowls had consumed 268 calories—or nearly 75 percent more than their tablemates.

WHAT TO EAT?

Numerous forces over the past several decades have coalesced to dramatically increase how much food we eat. They include the growth in portion sizes, the variety of choices available, and the number of

meals we eat out, especially fast food. One of the most powerful and invisible reasons we eat more is that the food we get in restaurants and purchase from grocery stores has been carefully designed to be ever more stimulating and alluring. Over time, in certain combinations, these foods overwhelm our body's natural instinct to resist excesses of any kind.

In his extraordinary book, *The End of Overeating*, former FDA commissioner David Kessler demonstrates that certain foods he terms "hyperpalatable" can be as addictive as drugs such as cocaine and heroin. Nor is it just sugar that seduces us. In a series of experiments beginning in the 1980s, a University of Washington researcher, Adam Drewnowski, demonstrated that we are even more drawn to sugar in combination with fat. "Fat," Drewnowski explains, "is "responsible for the characteristic texture, flavor, and aroma of many foods and largely determines the palatability of the diet."

Another researcher cited in Kessler's book, Anthony Sclafani at the University of Chicago, fed a group of rats a variety of ordinary supermarket foods such as chocolate, salami, peanut butter, bananas, and cheese. In just ten days, the supermarket-fed rats weighed twice as much as rats fed a more typical, blander diet. In another study, NIH researchers confined male subjects—human beings in this case—to a hospital ward. They were given easy access to a rich variety of foods twenty-four hours a day but also asked to stick as closely as possible to their typical eating patterns. The subjects ended up eating an average of 4,500 calories a day—50 percent more than they needed to maintain a stable weight.

"Hyperpalatable foods are hyperstimulants," writes Kessler. "And when a stimulant produces reward, we want more of it. Foods high in sugar, fat, and salt promote more of everything: more arousal . . . more thoughts of food . . . more urge to pursue food . . . more dopamine-stimulated approach behavior . . . more consumption . . . more opioid-driven reward . . . more overeating to feel better . . . more delay in feeling full . . . more loss of control . . . more preoccupation with food . . . more habit-driven behavior . . . and ultimately, more and more weight gain." Kessler terms this phenomenon "conditioned overeating."

Part of the explanation is that we're powerfully drawn to variety, which helps explain why diets that emphasize one kind of nutrient at

a near-total expense to another—very-low-fat or low-carbohydrate diets, for example—eventually prompt feelings of deprivation and craving. It's definitely possible to control weight and stabilize blood sugar by eating at extremes. A raft of dueling studies and passionate advocates has made the case for both low-fat *and* low-carbohydrate diets. Mediating between viewpoints in these food wars is like trying to negotiate between the Israelis and the Palestinians: no one gives much ground. What's clear is that for most of us, it's both difficult and unappealing to eat at any extreme over the long term. The best way to maintain a diet that is healthy, energizing, satisfying, and sustainable, We believe, is to include all nutrients in modest portions and to eat frequently. As the incomparable food writer Michael Pollan pithily puts it, “Eat. Not too much. Mostly plants.”

Just as it's undeniable that eating too much of any food is bad for us, so it's clear that foods high in sugar—cookies, muffins, cakes, candy, and sodas—and simple carbohydrates—pasta, potatoes, and breads—are what most powerfully drive up our blood sugar levels and increase the likelihood of developing diabetes. But the more immediate problem with sugars and simple carbohydrates is that they provide a poor source of enduring energy.

The foods that sustain us best are those that are released slowly into the blood stream, which keeps our energy steady. The glycemic index (GI) was developed in the early 1980s by researchers trying to help people with diabetes. The GI rates the effect of specific foods on our blood sugar levels. Foods that break down into glucose rapidly have a high GI, while those that are released into the bloodstream slowly have a low GI. Most fruits and vegetables, with the exception of potatoes, carrots, and watermelon, are low-GI foods. Foods including white rice, sweet potatoes, and whole wheat products have mid-range GIs. So do most milk chocolate bars and cookies, because their high sugar content is offset by fat, which is digested more slowly. The worst GI offenders are simple carbohydrates such as white bread, corn flakes, baked potatoes, French fries, potato chips, white bread, and beer.

Consider for a moment the consequences of eating a muffin at midmorning after skipping breakfast or a bag of potato chips as a snack in the late afternoon. The body breaks these foods down into glucose very quickly during digestion and releases the glucose into

the bloodstream. We experience a surge of energy, which is precisely what we're after. But because the glucose is released all at once, the energy is short-lived, which only increases our desire to eat more of the food that gave us the energy in the first place.

Add fat and salt to sugar, in alluring combinations, and the centers of the brain associated with desire light up and release more dopamine, which drives our inclination to eat more. "When layer upon layer of complexity is built into food, the effect becomes more powerful," explains Kessler. The psychologist Walter Mischel refers to this phenomenon as a "hot stimulus." Foods highest in fat, sugar, and salt generate the hottest stimulus of all.

A Cinnabon, to take just one example, is the ubiquitous and fragrant warm cinnamon roll slathered with frosting and sold in airports and shopping centers around the world. A Cinnabon roll, it turns out, contains three different kinds of sugar, including granulated white sugar, brown sugar in the sticky filling, and powdered sugar applied on top, along with cinnamon syrup, cream cheese, vanilla, lemon, and salt. A single Caramel Pecanbon—all of the above, plus nuts—contains 1,100 calories, 56 grams of fat, 600 milligrams of salt, 114 grams of carbohydrate, and 47 grams of sugar.

THE DEPRIVATION TRAP

Daunting as those numbers are, what you may be thinking is how delicious that Caramel Pecanbon would taste right now. If that's so, it's hardly surprising. The reason diets so rarely result in long-term weight loss is that they're based on actively avoiding the most desirable foods. We squander vast amounts of energy resisting certain foods until we can't stand it anymore, at which point we give in and eat too much of them. The speed with which we lose weight rarely matches the speed with which we regain it. Along the way, we run our blood sugar levels up and down, which costs us energy in the short term and wreaks havoc on our bodies over the long term.

We cannot make changes that last by resisting temptation. "Focusing single-mindedly on *not* eating eventually pushes us to eat more," explains Kessler. "Feeling deprived only increases the reward of food and then usually gives way to indulgence and often to

abandon.” As Kessler explains it, the cycle is self-reinforcing: The emotional drivers of wanting,”

struggle with the desperate desire to resist temptation. Behavior-activating messages that urge pursuit clash with internal messages demanding control. Our brains become battlegrounds. Ultimately our decision to reach for that food—to relax our struggle for restraint, to give in to consumption—becomes the only possible relief from the anxiety of a war within. But the satisfaction doesn’t last. By responding to a salient cue with action that generates immediate reward, we only strengthen the association between the cue and its reward.

Saying “no” to a temptation very quickly invokes the limits of our conscious will and discipline. Wansink and his colleague Jim Painter did a study in which they put dishes full of Hershey’s Kisses on the desks of a series of secretaries in office locations that got minimal foot traffic, to minimize the risk that passersby would eat the Kisses. Half the secretaries were given dishes with clear glass lids that were transparent, and half were given dishes with opaque lids. The secretaries who could see the chocolates all day long ate 71 percent more than those who could not. “If we see that temptress of a candy jar every five minutes,” Wansink concluded, “it means needing to say no 12 times the first hour, 12 times the second hour, and so on. Eventually some of those no’s turn into yes’s.”

Wansink is referring to our limited reservoir of will and discipline, which is depleted by each act of self-regulation. In addition, the more energy we expend resisting tempting foods, the less we have left over for the more important tasks in our lives. Or, as Russell Fazio, a psychology professor at Ohio State, explained it to Kessler: “Many times our resources are sufficiently taxed in day-to-day life that we just can’t engage in that kind of motivated overriding of our impulses.” Deprivation, Kessler concluded, is our real enemy. “When you use all of your emotional energy to void a behavior, you can become anxious and tense,” he writes, “We can’t sustain a change in behavior if it leaves us hungry, unhappy, angry, or resentful.”

PLEASURE MATTERS

The final key to eating smart is not to relentlessly resist pleasure. That means including the sugary, fat foods that many of us love most as part of our regular diet, but in portions that are intentionally limited and modest. To make that possible, we must replace our bad habits and impulsive behaviors with greater awareness and positive rituals.

We first met Gary Farro back in 2004, when he was a young banker at Wachovia. A former all-state football player, Farro was ambitious and hardworking, but he had allowed his weight to climb steadily to 265, far more than he needed on his six foot frame. He told himself that working out would only take time away from his job, and he was so busy that eating became almost an afterthought.

"I ran out of the house each morning without breakfast," he explains, "and I got into the habit of not eating at all until I remembered I had to eat, which could easily be two P.M. or later. I just wasn't really paying attention to what I was doing or how I felt or what the impact was. By the time I did get around to eating, I was so hungry I almost always gorged. I didn't think twice about eating something that wasn't good for me, because it was just easier to grab whatever was there."

The first breakthrough for Farro occurred when we helped him make the connection between the way he was eating and his energy level at work, especially in the afternoon, when he invariably found himself crashing. The second key was building rituals to define precisely what he was going to eat. He began eating a breakfast of either an apple, a banana with a cup of yogurt or a granola bar every morning. He also started taking a break at work approximately every two hours and eating a handful of almonds or another piece of fruit. At his main meals, he began eating less. Unhappy to discover how much stamina he'd lost as he got heavier, he also started working out regularly. In less than a year, without ever consciously dieting or depriving himself, he lost nearly sixty pounds, and he's kept them off for four years, through changes that included getting married, the birth of his first daughter, and moving to a new banking job in the midst of the economic meltdown.

"It was mostly about wanting to feel better," Farro told us. "I just

realized I had a lot more energy and I was a lot more effective when I changed the way I ate. It used to be that I'd get home at the end of the day and just collapse. Now I've got a two-year-old daughter, and the last thing I want is to be so tired that I can't spend quality time with her when I get home. I work twelve-hour days, but I never crash. When I get home, I have time with my daughter, and after she goes to sleep, I go to the gym at least three days a week, or I head down to my basement and get on the treadmill for thirty minutes."

The key to gaining control of our eating, as Farro discovered, is deciding in advance what we're going to eat, in what portions, and at what intervals. Only then can we circumvent the endless temptations, unconscious cues, and alluring surprises that override our self-discipline and cause us to go off track. "When you go into a day that's unplanned, then you're just faced with whatever hits you," says clinical dietician David Besio. "If you have a plan and you know what you're going to be eating that day, then you don't let the unplanned things get in your way."

CHAPTER EIGHT ACTION STEPS

- If you find you're eating too much or you are skipping meals too often, initiate a food log for one week. (To download a template, go to www.theenergyproject.com/foodlog.) Tracking what you eat, how much you eat, and when you eat it is the first step on the road to changing your eating habits. Are you following the sumo wrestler diet—going for long periods of time without eating and then eating a large meal in the evening? What one step can you take to get a more stable source of energy from the food you eat?
- Strive to eat small meals every three to four hours throughout the day, starting with breakfast. A high-protein, low-carbohydrate breakfast is especially critical to jump-starting our metabolism and keeping us from overeating later in the morning.
- Download a copy of the hunger scale at www.theenergyproject.com/hungerscale. Use it to increase your awareness of when you need to eat and when you've had enough to eat. Experiment with eating more slowly than you normally do by putting your utensils down after each bite of food. Research shows that it takes twenty minutes for our brains and our bodies to recognize that we are full.