

# **A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE GUIDE FOR WOMEN: MANAGING EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**





## **Table of Contents**

<b>Orientation .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Session 1 .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Session 2 .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Session 3 .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Session 4 .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Session 5 .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Session 6 .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Session 7 .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Session 8 .....</b>	<b>77</b>

<b>Appendix A: Tips for Healthy Eating .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Appendix B: Shape and Weight Concerns.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Appendix C: Vignettes for GSH Program .....</b>	<b>101</b>



# Orientation

Overall review of the program and why change



## Overview of the Program

The journey you are about to embark on will challenge you to change behaviors, thoughts and feelings to incorporate a healthier lifestyle. This 8 step program will guide you to evaluate your current habits and will provide a structure to help reduce binge eating, lifestyle changes, and take control of factors that influence your health and well-being. Although it will not be easy, if you try your hardest and follow the information presented in this manual, you will likely notice positive changes. A word of caution before proceeding with this program: *This program seeks to help individuals make healthy lifestyle changes, so the steps presented will need to be reviewed repeatedly and frequently over time. The good news is that eventually these new behaviors will be easier and become second nature. Hang in there and changes are bound to emerge!*



## Why Change

It is certainly possible to change: It is possible to start eating normally again; possible to enjoy eating rather than eat with fear, regret, or guilt; possible to be happy eating with others, possible to have a healthy lifestyle, and possible to lose weight.

Binge eating and unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as lack of physical activity and limited fruit and vegetable consumption, as well as the use of vomiting, laxatives, and diuretics to lose weight, affect each individual's life differently. Only you can decide how pressing the need is for change. This program can help you change behaviors but the key results will come from your own efforts. Because your own efforts are central to your success, it is important to ask yourself if you are ready. Readiness to change eating and physical activity patterns may seem unimportant to you at this time. Still, readiness is important to consider. *Readiness refers to your motivation and commitment, not just now but over the weeks and months to come. Starting a program when you are truly ready can put you in the best position to succeed over the long run.*

Your sense of urgency is likely to waver throughout the program so it often helps to have a set of guidelines by which you can measure the benefits of change unaffected by changing daily circumstances. If you have a long history of binge eating, and unhealthy behaviors, it is important to consider the circumstances that are influencing your decision to change. One factor may be the desire to lose weight; however losing weight is much easier than keeping it off. Some people have lost and regained as much as 1,000 pounds, in what nutrition expert Jean Mayer labeled, 'the rhythm method of girth control.' Losing and regaining weight is discouraging, so it will be beneficial to have other goals. The goal of this program is to help you establish healthy lifestyle behaviors, including reducing binge eating, consuming 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and engaging in physical activity. By focusing on these goals, you will have a concrete set of guidelines for measuring change and your progress in the program. Once you have made these behavioral changes, weight loss may follow.

## The Advantages

Start by drawing up a list of the potential advantages of change. To help you do so, ask yourself the following questions:

If I stop binge eating, increase physical activity, and eat more fruits and vegetables:

- Will I feel better about myself? \_\_\_\_\_
- Will it improve my quality of life? \_\_\_\_\_
- Will my physical health be enhanced? \_\_\_\_\_
- Will others benefit? \_\_\_\_\_

People are often surprised at how much better they feel once they stop binge eating and start improving their lifestyle. Even minor binge eating problems can have subtle negative effects on your life. You may be unnecessarily irritable at times, your concentration may not be as good as it could be, you may avoid social events that you would really like to attend, and your physical health may be impaired. Perhaps you don't realize that these are direct results of your binge eating problem and will resolve as it improves. Lack of regular physical activity and a diet with few fruits and vegetables also increases your risk for health problems. Research has shown that people who are sedentary and do not eat sufficient fruits and vegetables are at increased risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancers. Also, lack of regular physical activity is associated with symptoms of depression and sleep difficulties. Another benefit of change is the effect it has on morale and self-image: Many people find it restores their sense of self-respect and self-worth. As you start to overcome binge eating problems and engage in a healthy lifestyle, a different person may emerge. The depression, tension, and irritability fade, concentration improves, and old (maybe even forgotten) interests return.

One of the most compelling reasons to stop binge eating is the harm that the associated behaviors of dieting, lack of physical activity, self-induced vomiting, and laxative abuse may be doing to your health. When you stop doing these things, you can expect a gradual return of the normal sensations of fullness and hunger, an increase in energy, and an improvement in your overall sense of "healthiness". Binge eating and obesity are often associated, and while the exact relationship between the two is not fully understood, there is no doubt that you would be in a better position to control your weight if you had control over your eating. Importantly, regular physical activity and increasing the number of fruits and vegetables in your diet will result in greater improvements in your sense of health and well-being.

The other people in your life—friends, family, and coworkers—will undoubtedly notice the blossoming of the person underneath as the binge eating problem recedes and healthier behaviors emerge. You will stop being unpredictably irritable, touchy about eating and sensitive about your shape and weight and being with others. As a result, your relationships and your performance at work are bound to improve.



## The Disadvantages

Of course, you should also consider possible disadvantages of change. There may be some, and it is worth balancing these against the advantages. You might be concerned about how you would feel if you did not succeed. Perhaps you are tempted to do nothing rather than risk failing. While this is understandable, it is a defeatist attitude that you should do your best to resist. There is every reason to expect that, with the right sort of help, your binge eating problem and lifestyle will improve. Furthermore, if you decide to use this self-help program and make a determined effort to do so, there can be no question of failure. *If things do not improve, the program simply was not right for you; it will have failed, not you.* And if that is the case, many other options are available.

One other point to stress is that a good way of assessing the seriousness of a problem is to see how easy it is to overcome. If you discover that you can readily stop binge eating and engage in healthy lifestyle behaviors, then at least you have learned that the problem is conquerable. On the other hand, if you discover that it is not easy to change, you will have learned that it is a significant problem, perhaps more so than you thought. In this case you should perhaps consider it more seriously than you have been doing.

Try it for Yourself!	
Advantages	Disadvantages

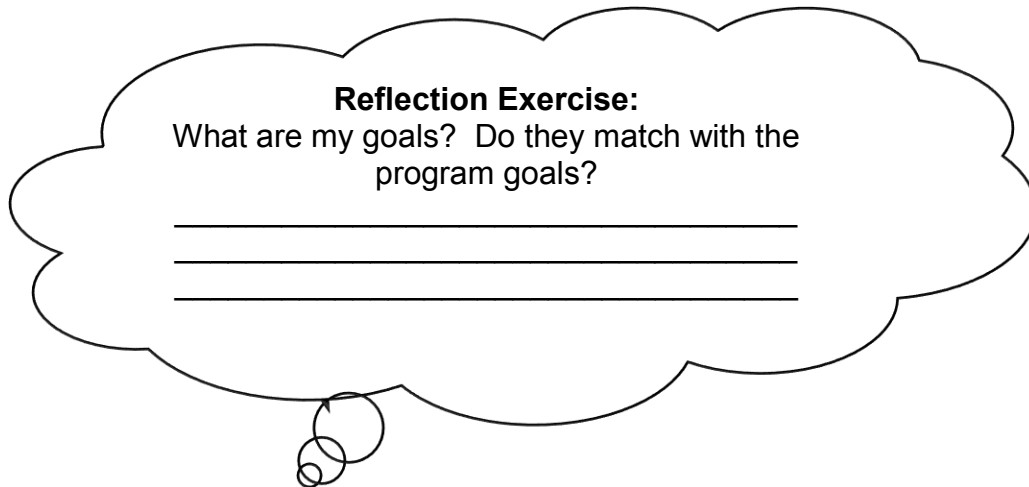
## What to change?

There is one other point to consider: your goals and how they match those of the program.

The primary goals of this program are to help you eat in a healthy fashion without binge eating, to increase fruit and vegetable intake, and to increase physical activity in your daily life. If you are to make a full and lasting recovery, you will need to eat

at regular intervals through the day, you will need to eat adequate amounts of food, you will need to make sure you are not avoiding any foods, and you will need to eat 2 servings of fruits and 3 servings of vegetables and engaging in physical activity every day. How to achieve these goals is discussed in detail in the program.

What if your goals differ from those of this program? Perhaps, for example, your primary goal is to get a certain figure or specific weight. In that case you may discover that there is a clash between what you want to achieve and the advice and information given here. Think carefully about doing things your way. After all, how well have these goals served you so far? Years of clinical experience and research inform this program and indicate that some things are just not possible. For instance, for many people most forms of dieting are simply incompatible with overcoming their binge eating problem since dieting makes them prone to binge. This process will not be easy; it generally requires a lot of effort. Half-hearted attempts to change are unlikely to succeed. Give this program the benefit of the doubt by suspending your reservations and trying your best to make a fresh start.



**Reflection Exercise:**  
What are my goals? Do they match with the  
program goals?

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### **How to use this program**

This self-help program consists of 8 steps designed to be followed in the order specified. The steps are additive; that is, each successive step involves adding something to what you have already been doing in the preceding step(s). It is not a good idea to skip around in the program, doing bits of this and bits of that. Start at the beginning and work your way through to the end, following the guidelines provided.

That said, be aware that not all the components of the program will be relevant to you. The program has been designed for all those who binge eat and want to enact healthy lifestyle change. However, people vary. The severity of the eating problem varies, as does the presence of associated problems. Most people who binge also diet, often strictly, but some do not diet at all. Some people eat healthy and exercise regularly and others do not. Similarly, some are highly concerned about their

appearance and weight, while others are not. Some are perfectionists and highly organized, whereas others are chaotic. Some are overweight; some are not. And some vomit or take laxatives or diuretics; others do not. All these features are relevant to binge eating and healthy living and need to be addressed by the program. Therefore the program has many components, some of which will not apply to you. For the most part it will be obvious what applies and what does not. But when you are in doubt, the best policy is to assume that the advice does apply and follow it.

Here are some tips to help you succeed:

*Persevere, especially when the advice seems difficult to follow.* Often following the advice given in this program will be difficult, because it involves directly tackling the things that keep the binge eating problem and other unhealthy behaviors going. In general the harder you find it to follow the advice, the more important it is that you make your best effort to do so. Following the advice is the only way you will break out of the vicious circles that are maintaining your binge eating problem and unhealthy behaviors. However, keep in mind that *you will not need to follow the advice forever*. You will need to do many things to bring about change, but only some are relevant to ensuring that the changes persist in the future.



*Do not rush through the program.* Instead, proceed at the pace suggested, since experience indicates that this will work best. Sometimes it is a good idea to stay at a step for an extra week or so to see if there is more that you can do. If you have a setback, it is often wise to go back a step.

In general, it takes people with longstanding binge eating and problems with having a healthy lifestyle between four and six months to get the most out of the program. Some people are able to change rapidly; for others it is a slow process. The key issue is whether you are making progress. If you are moving in the right direction, it is reasonable to carry on. On the other hand, if you have not benefited at all by the time you have reached step 6, you should seek outside help. The same applies if you get stuck permanently.

*Do not expect overnight success.* Don't be disappointed by less-than-dramatic results. Change takes time, and binge eating and changing your lifestyle are not likely to be resolved within just a few weeks.

*Do not expect to make smooth and steady progress.* It is normal for progress to occur little by little. There are likely to be periods when things go well, times when you get stuck, and times when you have setbacks and the problem seems to worsen. In the course of the program, you will be monitoring your progress. This will allow you to identify and then tackle the obstacles that are interfering with your ability to overcome binge eating and having a healthy lifestyle.

*Expect the urge to binge and engage in unhealthy behaviors to persist.* Even after you have completely stopped binge eating and are exercising and eating healthy, the urge to binge often persists for several months. Don't be discouraged by this. The urge will be triggered by the same circumstances that used to trigger actual binges or interfered with your ability to have a healthy lifestyle. This self-help program will help you resist the urge to binge, and gradually it will fade away and disappear.

*Be sure to hold review sessions.* Until your binge eating is well under control and your lifestyle is well established have frequent review sessions. They are an important part of the program, and you should not allow other activities to take precedence over them.

*Consider enlisting someone to help.* You might choose a friend or relative, whose main role will be to provide support and encouragement at times of difficulty. Helpers need to remain in the background unless their help is requested.

**Reflection Exercise:**

Who is someone you can enlist to support you on your health journey?

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NOTES:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# Step 1

Starting well: Healthy lifestyle, benefits of physical activity (PA), daily self-monitoring of food intake and PA, and weekly weighing.





### Checklist for Step 1

- Monitor your daily food and beverage consumption and physical activity
- Brainstorm ways to improve self-monitoring
- Reflect on any patterns of eating, weigh yourself once per week

### Starting Well: Establishing a Healthy Lifestyle

Establishing a healthy lifestyle requires making permanent changes and incorporating those as part of your everyday life. It takes time to make those changes but over time those habits become automatic and easier to maintain.

### Benefits of Physical Activity

An increase in physical activity can have important effects on your health, decreasing your chances of developing health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer, reducing your risk for falls, improving your mood, how you feel about yourself, and your levels of energy. Becoming more physically active can start with small steps. *You can begin with short bouts of moderate activity such as 10 minutes of walking with the goal of reaching at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day.*

### Importance of Daily Self-Monitoring and Weekly Weighing

*Self-monitoring is central to this program.* It serves two essential purposes:

- 1) Monitoring provides you with important information about your eating problem and lifestyle habits. You may say that you are all too aware of the problem. In a sense, of course, this is true. But accurate monitoring almost always highlights features that were not obvious beforehand. Monitoring gives you answers to these questions:
  - Exactly what do you eat during your binges? How does it compare with what you eat at other times? Do your binges consist of foods that you are trying to avoid eating?
  - Exactly when do your binges occur? Is there a predictable pattern? For example, do they always occur in the evening? Are weekdays any different from weekends?
  - Are there any triggers for your binges? Do your binges tend to occur under certain circumstances? Do they occur when you are bored, depressed, lonely or anxious?
  - Do your binges appear to serve any function? For example, do they release feelings of tension? Are they a way of punishing yourself?
  - How often do you engage in physical activity? When are you more likely to do so? What stops you from engaging in physical activity? What makes it easier for you to be physically active? What is the activity that you typically do?

For reasons that will be explained later, the answers to these questions can help you overcome binge eating and engage in healthy behaviors.

- 2) When done properly, monitoring opens up possibilities for change. Monitoring your eating and physical activity accurately and at the time you are doing it gradually reveals that apparently automatic, out-of-control behavior is nothing of the sort. You can learn a great deal about yourself from simply monitoring. When you feel tense or angry or whenever you break one of your dietary rules, binge eating does not have to be your reaction. It is just that you have grown so used to doing so that doing anything else seems impossible. Monitoring along the lines recommended will show you that you have options other than binge eating and that there are ways of increasing your levels of physical activity. In this way it will help you change.

### Weekly Weighing

People often become too focused on the scale. This single-minded way of evaluating your progress can lead to disappointment when the scale moves less than you'd like and deprives you of opportunities to feel good about other changes. The changes you make in reducing binge eating and increasing your physical activity can improve your life in many ways regardless of the impact they have on your weight. Your body will celebrate these changes so it's important that your mind does too. Pay attention to the changes you make, reward yourself for them, and make sure you consider changes in energy, sleep, vitality, and how you feel about yourself as additional markers of improvement.



Most of us have worried for years about ideal weight. A great deal of scientific research evidence now converges on an important conclusion – that even modest weight loss can have important health benefits. Most experts now agree that losing 5-10% is a reasonable and achievable weight loss goal. The new weight loss goals are designed to help people achieve a *healthier* weight and to push aside the notion of *ideal* weight. Most people can achieve a healthier weight at which they will feel better, have more energy, and reduce their risk of health complications. You should weigh yourself once per week on the same day and at the same time (i.e., every Tuesday morning at 8AM). Monitoring weight weekly rather than daily helps to provide a more accurate assessment of healthy weight loss, and it reduces the fixation on day-to-day weight fluctuations.

### Why you should monitor-Despite any objections

At this stage you may find yourself reluctant to entertain the idea of monitoring. Perhaps you are already raising one of these objections:

- You have kept food and physical activity records before, and it has not helped. However, it is most unlikely that you have monitored in a way this program recommends. Keep an open mind.
- Monitoring sounds like too great a chore. You might feel that you are too busy or that your lifestyle makes it impossible. It is certainly true that monitoring is difficult for some people, but it is very, very rare for someone's lifestyle to make it truly impossible for him or her to monitor. Your willingness to monitor is one test of your commitment to change.
- The shame you feel over your eating or lack of physical activity makes you unable to confront the problem in this way. If you feel like this, monitoring may indeed be particularly difficult. Nevertheless, if you are to overcome your binge eating and engage in healthy lifestyle practices, you have no alternative but to face up to it.
- You feel that monitoring will make you even more preoccupied with your eating or lack of physical activity than you already are. To an extent this may be true, but the preoccupation will be more constructive because it will be focused on how to overcome the eating problem and enact healthy lifestyle change.

#### Let's Think More About Monitoring

Advantages	Disadvantages

## How to use the monitoring records

A blank monitoring record is shown below. You may photocopy it or produce your own version modeled on it. You'll need a fresh record for each day, and you'll need to carry it with you wherever you go. We recommend that you do not count calories because you will need to record additional information for the purpose of this program. Also, this program focuses on reducing binge eating and engaging in a healthy lifestyle and not on calorie counting.

<b>Weekly Weigh In:</b> _____ lbs.						
<b>Day:</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____						
Time	Food and Drink Consumed	Number of Servings of Vegetables	Binge (Yes or No)	Any Vomiting or Laxative Use, etc.	Context/Setting	Feelings
Time	Type of Physical Activity					Minutes Performed

## What you should do

*Start monitoring as described, but don't try to change anything yet.* It is important to start by getting into the habit of accurate monitoring. You will be changing your eating patterns and increasing physical activity in later steps. Monitoring must become a habit since you will be doing it for the duration of the program. Don't take days off from monitoring (or from the program) and don't omit anything from your record. *This may be difficult, but it is essential to be honest with yourself in order to identify areas for change!*

Keep your monitoring records somewhere private and keep them together so that you can look back over them. This will allow you to detect trends over time and thereby assess the extent to which you have changed. (If you are taking the guided self-help approach, you will need to review your monitoring records with your supporter).

### **Weekly Weighing**

*Start weighing yourself once a week on a predetermined morning of your choice. A weekday is usually best, since on weekends you may dwell on any changes that have occurred. Do your best not to weigh yourself between these times.*

Many people find this advice difficult to follow. If you are used to weighing yourself more often than this, you may feel uneasy decreasing the frequency of weighing. You may be afraid that your weight will go up without your knowing. If you have been avoiding weighing, you may be afraid that restarting will lead you to become preoccupied with your weight and as a result you will want to weigh yourself more often than once a week. Whether this applies to you or not, do your best to stick to weighing yourself once a week. This way you will detect changes that occur without being distracted by day-to-day fluctuations. You may experience one or more weeks during this program when you fail to lose weight, or even worse, gain weight! Reviewing your change in weight over many weeks can prevent despair. A slight gain is easier to tolerate when your records remind you that you have been losing weight in a steady manner.

You may need to buy a scale (or use the one provided for you). An inexpensive bathroom scale is fine. And if you are tempted to weigh yourself between your weekly weigh-ins, move the scale to a place where it is out of sight and relatively inaccessible so that the temptation is easier to resist.

### Instructions for Weekly Summary Sheet

**Column 1:** This indicates how many weeks you have been following the program.

**Column 2:** Record how many binges you had over the last seven days. You should get this figure from your monitoring records

**Column 3:** Record the number of times you practiced any extreme method of weight control, such as self-induced vomiting or misusing laxatives or diuretics. Record each behavioral separately. Again, you should get these figures from your monitoring records

**Column 4:** Record how many “good days” you had during the week. *A good day is one on which you did your best to change by following the program.* The definition of a good day will alter as you work through the program. At this point a good day is one on which you monitored accurately.

**Column 5:** Record your weight. If you weighed yourself more than once during the week, record the weight you were on the morning on which you were meant to weigh yourself.

**Column 6:** Record the number of days you reached your goal of fruit/vegetable intake (2 servings of fruit and 3 servings of vegetables)

**Column 7:** Record the number of days you engaged in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity

**Column 8:** Record other points of note. For example, you should record when you move from one step of the program to the next. Also note any events that significantly influenced your eating; for example, being ill or away from home.

### Weekly Summary Sheet

Week	Binges	V/L/D	Good Days	Weight	F/V	Physical Activity	Events
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

### Example of Weekly Summary Sheet

Week	Binges	V/L/D	Good Days	Weight	F/V	Physical Activity	Events
1	9		4	142	2	0	Started Step 1
2	7		7	144	3	2	
3	4		5	143	2	2	Step 2
4	3		5	139	4	3	Wrote grocery list ahead of time
5	5		7	139	4	4	Got worse – Why?
6	2		5	140	5	5	Saw parents on weekend

## Review Checklist for Step 1

- Have I been monitoring?
- Can I improve my monitoring?
- Are any patterns in my eating and physical activity becoming obvious?
- Am I weighing myself once a week?

NOTES:

[illegible]





## **Step 2**

Establishing regular patterns of eating and physical activity;  
setting realistic goals.



### Checklist for Step 2

- Each day, plan regular meals and snacks
- Restrict your eating to the day's meals and snacks
- Do not skip any meals or snacks
- Gaps between meals should be no longer than three to four hours
- Do not eat between your meals and snacks
- Each day, plan on engaging in physical activity
- Get back on track when things go wrong
- Adjust the timing of your meals and snacks and physical activity to accommodate special situations
- Follow the advice regarding self-induced vomiting and the misuse of laxative and diuretics
- Set realistic goals for yourself in this program

### Regular Eating

Introducing a pattern of regular eating is probably the single most important element in this program. It involves restricting your eating to three planned meals each day plus two or three planned snacks.

A typical pattern would be:

8:00 A.M.: Breakfast

10:30 A.M.: Midmorning snack

12:30 P.M.: Lunch

3:00 P.M.: Midafternoon snack

6:00 P.M.: Evening meal

8:00 P.M.: Evening snack

If your eating is very chaotic, you may not be able to introduce this eating pattern all at once. In this case introduce it gradually, starting with the part of the day that is least chaotic. This is usually the morning. So, start by introducing breakfast and lunch (and possibly a midmorning snack) according to the guidelines given here. Then, over the next few weeks, gradually introduce the other meals and snacks until the full pattern is in place.

***Leave no more than three or four hours between planned meals and snacks.*** You will need to adjust the exact timing of your meals and snacks to suit your commitments, but try to establish as regular a pattern as possible. The timing may need to vary from day to day; you will probably, for instance, want weekends to be different from weekdays.

***Do not skip meals or snacks.*** This is important, because skipping scheduled meal or snack will make you vulnerable to binge at these times.

***Between the planned meals and snacks, do your best not to eat.*** In this way, your day will be divided up by the meals and snacks. Eating between these planned times will disrupt your eating schedule and may increase the likelihood of

skipping the next meal or snack. As discussed above, this will make you vulnerable to binge.

***If things go wrong and you eat (or binge) between meals and snacks, it is important to get back on track as rapidly as possible, and not to be too hard on yourself.*** Do your best to resist the temptation to avoid (or cut down the size of) your next meal or snack, since doing so will increase the risk of further problems. Also, the remainder of the day is not lost; just because you ate an unplanned meal or snack doesn't mean that your day is ruined. You can still get back on track. View each meal and snack as separate goals that do not influence each other. If you do not meet your goal for a given meal or snack, learn from the experience and focus on the next meal or snack.

***At the beginning of each day (or the preceding evening), figure out when you are going to eat and when you are going to engage in physical activity and write down the times.*** At all points of the day you should know when you are next going to eat and when you are going to engage in physical activity.

***Do your best to stick to your plan and review your progress at the end of each day.*** Then make whatever adjustments seem appropriate. For example, you may discover that you are having your evening snack so late in the day that it is not breaking up the evening. In that case, try moving it to an earlier time.

#### **Reflection Exercise:**

How many of the following meals do you eat per week?

Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_ Midmorning snack \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch \_\_\_\_\_ Midafternoon snack \_\_\_\_\_

Evening meal \_\_\_\_\_ Evening snack \_\_\_\_\_

Would you consider your eating "chaotic"? YES NO

Do you skip meals or snacks? YES NO

Your responses will help guide you in this program

## Some advice on meals

***Restrict eating to certain places in your home.*** Part of re-gaining control over eating involves formalizing it. Eating should happen while seated at a table or equivalent and should not be within arm's reach of supplies of food. You should not eat in your bedroom or in the bathroom. If you have only one room, restrict your eating to one place in the room.

***Concentrate when eating.*** While it may be tempting to distract yourself when eating, this is not a good idea. Instead, it is important that you focus on what you are doing. You need to learn to savor food. You also need to check that you are not eating in an abnormal way. For example, it is important not to eat too fast. Being aware of what you are doing will also help ensure that your meals and snacks do not turn into binges. With this end in mind:

- *Do not engage in any other activity when eating (such as watching television or reading).*
- *Sit down when eating.* Eating on the move can result in “grazing.”

***When eating, restrict the availability of food.*** When eating a meal or snack, have only a preplanned amount of food at hand. Whenever practicable, keep packages and serving dishes off the table in case you are tempted to eat more than you had intended.

- *Practice controlling your eating.*
  - *Practice putting down your utensils between mouthfuls.*
  - *Insert a number of pauses in your meals.*
  - *Practice leaving some food on the plate.* This may seem wasteful, but anything that will prevent you from binge eating is not truly wasteful.
  - *Discard leftovers.* At this stage they may be too tempting.

***When eating with others, do not be persuaded to eat more than you had planned.*** Many people are put under pressure to have second helpings or larger quantities than they want. You must resist this pressure. Practice polite but firm ways of refusing—e.g., “No, thank you. I have really had enough. It was delicious.” If someone still puts unwanted food on your plate, leave it untouched. Under these circumstances it is really that person who is being impolite, not you. This may be difficult at times given family and social expectations around eating, but remember that sticking to your plans is really important for helping you prevent binge eating.

***When eating away from home, remain in control by selecting food ahead of time and sticking to it.*** It is easy to be tempted to eat more from a bread basket, chips, or being offered dessert. Tips to stick to your plan:

- Order an appetizer or salad or a la carte
- Ask the waiter not to bring the bread basket

- Review the menu and make a selection before you even arrive at the restaurant, consider writing it down on your monitoring sheet to encourage yourself to stick to that choice
- Share meals with a friend, or have the server box up half of the meal at the beginning to take home with you
- At fast food restaurants, opt for salads, grilled instead of fried options, and smaller size portions

### **Some advice on shopping and cooking**

***Plan your shopping.*** Do not shop for food on the spur of the moment. Instead, plan it in advance. If possible, avoid shopping on days when you feel at risk of binge eating. You may find it helpful to shop with a relative or friend. It is also helpful to shop on a full stomach.

***Buy foods you need to prepare.*** In order to avoid impulsive eating, having food that requires preparation may slow down the process.

***Limit your stock of “dangerous” food.*** At this stage, it is best to restrict the availability of foods that trigger your binges as well as foods on which you typically binge. Therefore, when shopping, avoid buying these foods. If this is not practical, limit the quantities that you buy.

***Make sure to have fruits and vegetables readily available.*** To reduce the cost of eating more fruits and vegetables and to have more variety in your diet consider purchasing items that are in season. Frozen vegetables and fruits are also good options as they retain their nutritional value and do not spoil so easily. Try to select frozen items that are not high in sugars and fat.



***Ensure that you have adequate supplies of “safe” food.*** These are foods that you (typically) do not binge on and/or are not likely to eat large quantities. It is important that you have stocks of food that you feel comfortable eating.

***When cooking, avoid tasting.*** Picking at what you’re cooking can trigger binges. Some people find it helpful to chew gum since this makes picking less appealing. If you feel like you need to taste the food before serving it to others, try to limit the number of times to taste the food and the amount of each tasting.

### **What to do about self-induced vomiting**

Some people with binge eating problems vomit after eating. In the majority of instances, this vomiting occurs only after binge eating. Therefore, as the frequency of binge eating decreases, so will the frequency of vomiting. For this reason vomiting usually does not need to be tackled separately. The only appropriate advice is to choose meals and snacks that you are prepared not to get rid of; and if you are tempted to vomit after eating, do your best to resist the urge. Just as feelings of fullness decline after eating, so do urges to vomit. So, if you have a strong urge to vomit, distract yourself for a while and perhaps make vomiting more difficult by staying in the company of others. *Remember, vomiting encourages further binge eating.*

A small minority of people vomit after eating anything at all. If this applies to you and you are unable to stop, you should seek professional help. This is a difficult habit to overcome on your own.

### **What to do about laxative and diuretic misuse**

What was just said about self-induced vomiting applies equally to laxative and diuretic misuse. On the other hand, if you are taking laxatives and diuretics regularly, my advice is simply to stop taking them. Perhaps surprisingly, most people find that they are able to do this simply by putting their mind to it, especially once they appreciate how ineffective these methods are at preventing calorie absorption.

### **Some advice on engaging in physical activity**

One of the easiest ways to incorporate physical activity in our daily lives is by walking. Walking has many advantages – it can be done by almost anyone, it is convenient and you can do it anywhere (your neighborhood, the mall, gym, around the office, or while standing in your living room); it can be done at any pace; it is enjoyable; it is inexpensive; and it can be a social event. Beginning your walking program slowly and gradually and working your way up is important. Starting with less than you can tolerate is not dangerous, but starting with more can be painful and discouraging. If you are not using a step counter, it is best to track the minutes that you walk each day. Consider beginning by adding 5-10 minutes of walking to your day. If you are not used to walking, begin with a few minutes each day. If you are walking each day already, keep up the good work and try adding 5-10 minutes per day each week until you are walking about an hour each day. This may seem like



a lot but keep in mind that you can accumulate this time incrementally – 5 minutes here, 10 minutes there- it all adds up! The *ultimate* goal is to walk 30 minutes to one hour each day. Try to increase your walking to this level gradually, so as not to make it difficult or unpleasant. Here are a few suggestions to adapt your walking program: get up 30 minutes early to walk; walk at lunch; walk during work breaks; walk after work;

walk after dinner; walk before bedtime; walk during TV commercials and between programs; walk around your child's soccer games or while your child's playing at the park. You may also enjoy other activities such as dancing, bicycling, swimming, the idea is for you to be physically active on a daily basis. You'll be surprised to see how quickly the minutes add up!

### Setting Realistic Goals

One common problem in any effort to make changes is having an unrealistic goal. Some individuals do not recognize they are setting unattainable goals but it happens anyway. Examples of this are having fantasies of being thin and having life improve immediately. These things may happen but not right away. Think about your goals for the program. Think of specific answers to these four questions: 1) How soon do you expect to stop binge eating? 2) How soon do you expect to follow a regular pattern of eating? 3) How soon do you expect to engage in physical activity for at least 30 minutes per day? 4) How much weight do you expect to lose each week? 5) Will your life be different when you lose weight or stop binge eating? 6) Do you expect stopping binge eating or losing weight to be easy and quick? Then evaluate how realistic it is to meet these expectations.

Goal setting is important. It gives you something to strive for, a standard against which to measure your progress. As you establish your weekly personal goals, remember several things. The first is to set reasonable goals. The tendency for many people is to set goals too high. This makes good progress seem trivial. For example, losing more than three to four pounds of body fat per week is physically impossible, even by fasting. So, a weight loss of 1-2 pounds per week is quite good. Slow and steady are the key words. This represents the most reasonable approach to making lifestyle changes. You will be most satisfied with your results if you set clear and realistic goals that you have a good chance of attaining. Take a minute now and think about what a reasonable goal would be for you. This is a good starting goal.

Examples of realistic goals and how to stay on track and meet these goals are listed on the next page:



<b>Realistic goals and expectations</b>			
<b>Goal or expectation</b>	<b>Comparing/outcome</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>	<b>Emotional Response</b>
Will try to be physically active most days of the week	Missed a day of physical activity	"It was a busy day at work, and I'm too tired to be physically active. But I've still been physically active five days this week."	Satisfied, desire to keep being physically active
Limit eating fries to a couple times a month	Ate an order of fries	"Those were good fries, but I haven't really missed eating them all that much."	In control, responsible, satisfied
Try to follow a regular pattern of eating	Overate at a birthday party	"That was a fun birthday celebration. I did overeat but I have kept my eating plan most days this week."	In control, high self-esteem, encouraged

### Review Checklist for Step 2

- Each day, am I planning regular meals and snacks?
- Am I trying to restrict my eating to the day's meals and snacks?
- Am I skipping any of the meals and snacks?
- Are the gaps between my meals and snacks no longer than three to four hours?
- Am I eating between my meals and snacks?
- Each day, am I planning to engage in physical activity?
- Am I getting back on track when things go wrong?
- Am I adjusting the timing of my meals and snacks to accommodate special situations?
- Am I adjusting the timing of my physical activity to accommodate special occasions or other responsibilities?
- Am I engaging in daily physical activity?
- Am I following the advice regarding self-induced vomiting and the misuse of laxative and diuretics?
- Have I set realistic goals for myself?

### Maintaining Previous Step

- Can I improve my monitoring?
- Are any patterns in my eating becoming obvious?
- Am I weighing myself once a week?

NOTES:

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## **Step 3**

Healthy dietary guidelines, increasing physical activity, re-evaluating goals and overcoming challenges.



#### Checklist for Step 3

- Make sure to include 2 servings of fruit and 3 servings of vegetables every day as part of your regular meals and snacks
- Engage in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day.
- Re-evaluate your goals to ensure that they remain realistic

### **Temporary vs. Permanent Lifestyle Change**

Changing eating habits is not something that happens while a person is on a diet and then stops later when the diet ends. Multiple factors influence what we eat. For example, being around food may stimulate your appetite. The types of food you ate growing up and the meaning of those foods may influence what you eat as an adult. Some important family traditions involve food. For example, for some people, family gatherings involve certain types of food and food is an expression of love and cultural practices. Your choice of food may also be influenced by your feelings or emotions, for example, you may crave sweets when you are feeling stressed or sad.

### **Benefits of Fruit and Vegetable Consumption**

Increasing your intake of a variety of vegetables and fruits is an important component of healthy eating. Vegetables provide important nutrients and fiber that are essential for your health. Importantly, having a healthy diet will help decrease your cravings for unhealthy foods and will help you feel better and have more energy.



### **Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Consumption**

One of the key components of this program is to eat 2 servings of fruit and 3 servings of vegetables (5 servings total) per day. The 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans gives the following recommendations for increasing consumption of vegetables and fruits. Incorporating fruit and vegetables as part of your planned meals is an important step for achieving a healthy diet.

- Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark-green, red and orange vegetables, and beans and peas.
- Include vegetables in meals and in snacks. Fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables all count. When eating canned vegetables, choose those labeled as reduced sodium or no salt-added.
- Focus on dietary fiber—beans and peas are a great source. Add beans or peas to salads (e.g., kidney or garbanzo beans, black or white beans), soups (e.g.,

split peas or lentils), and side dishes (e.g., baked beans or pinto beans), or serve as a main dish.

- Keep raw, cut-up vegetables handy for quick snacks. If serving with a dip, choose lower calorie options, such as yogurt-based dressings or hummus, instead of sour cream or cream cheese-based dips.
- When eating out, choose a vegetable as a side dish. With cooked vegetables, request that they be prepared with little or no fat and salt. With salads, ask for the dressing on the side so you can decide how much you use. When adding sauces, condiments, or dressings to vegetables, use small amounts and look for lower calorie options (e.g., reduced-fat cheese sauce or fat-free dressing).

Recommendations for fruit consumption are below:

- Eat a variety of fruits and maximize taste and freshness by adapting your choices to what is in season.
- Choose whole or cut-up fruits more often than fruit juice. Fruit juices often contain added sugars. When choosing juices, select 100% fruit juice.
- Use fruit as snacks, in salads, or as desserts. Instead of sugars, syrups, or other sweet toppings, use fruit to top foods such as cereal and pancakes.
- Use canned, frozen, and dried fruits, as well as fresh fruits. Unsweetened fruit or fruit canned in 100% juice is the better choice because light or heavy syrup adds sugar and calories.
- Keep fruit handy for quick snacks.

#### Healthy Dietary Guidelines and Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

In addition to eating 2 servings of fruits and 3 servings of vegetables per day, other important healthy dietary suggestions are below:

**Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat.** Fats provide you with energy and essential fatty acids, and they help the body absorb vitamins A, D, E, and K, and carotenoids. However, high amounts of some fats can increase your risk for cancer, heart disease, and weight gain. You need some fat in the food you eat but you need to make the right choices. Some kinds of fats, especially saturated fats (meat, cheeses, butter, and other dairy products), increase the risk of heart disease by raising blood cholesterol. Unsaturated fats (olive, canola, sunflower, and corn oils, nuts, seeds, and fish) do not increase blood cholesterol. You may want to cut back on the red meat and fatty meats and substitute those with fish, beans, and nuts.

**Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.** Sugars and carbs are a source of energy. During digestion all carbs except fiber break down into sugar. Sugars and starches occur naturally in many foods that also supply other nutrients.

**Choose and prepare foods with less salt.** A diet that is low in sodium can help reduce your risk of high blood pressure and contribute to heart disease.



**Make sure to drink enough water.**

Consuming sufficient water is essential for keeping your body functioning well. To stay healthy it has been recommended that you should consume between 6 and 8 cups of fluids. Water is the best option but coffee and tea without added sugar are also good options to keep you hydrated. Consider having a glass of water or a low-calorie beverage with each one of your main meals and between meals.



**If you drink sodas, sport or energy drinks, or alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.** These beverages add calories but provide little nutrition.

**Choose appropriate portion sizes.** A 3 oz. serving of protein is the size of your palm or a deck of cards, and a ½ cup serving of rice or pasta will fit in your cupped hand. One of your fists is about 1 cup of vegetables, and both fists are a 2-cup bowl of salad. For snacks, a piece of fruit (about the size of your fist), a small handful of nuts, or a tablespoon of peanut butter (about the size of your thumb) will hold your hunger until the next planned meal.

Increasing Physical Activity

Walking can be a lot of fun if you work to make it enjoyable. Regular physical activity is key and the more fun you have, the more you will work and the more successful you will be. Here are some ways to make walking more enjoyable: pay attention to interesting things you see on your walk; bring entertainment like an iPod, music, or a book on tape; don't overdo it, doing too much too soon can burn you out; take a gradual approach; and walk with a partner if it helps you to remain accountable.

Here are some suggestions to increase your lifestyle activity: Use the stairs because climbing stairs burns more calories per minute than a casual stroll; park further away; increase walking – at home, take things up the stairs in several trips instead of letting them accumulate for one trip; count all activity as physical activity, including vacuuming, clean and washing your car, raking the leaves, or mowing the lawn, etc.

Some strategies to stay active include the following:

- Make a physical activity appointment in your day planner
- Set your computer to beep every hour, reminding you to get up and take a short walk
- Leave yourself a voice-mail reminder to do physical activity or send yourself an email to schedule physical activity time
- Make an activity “date” with a friend or partner
- Keep your walking shoes with you in a bag or in your car
- Put your physical activity clothes on the dresser so you see them the first thing in the morning or when you get home in the evening
- Take your pet for a walk everyday
- Set up a brief time to be active during the workday

Time	Food and Drink Consumed	Number of Servings of Vegetables	Number of Servings of Fruits	Binge (Yes or No)	Any Vomiting or Laxative Use, etc.	Context/ Setting	Feelings
Time	Type of Physical Activity					Minutes Performed	

### Re-evaluating Goals and Overcoming Challenges

Be sure to keep evaluating your goals to make sure that they are realistic. As you are able, begin to incorporate healthy strategies to overcome challenges you face while striving for these goals. Examples of this are below:

Unrealistic goals and expectations with no coping response			
Goal or expectation	Comparing/ outcome	Thoughts	Emotional Response
Must do physical activity everyday	Missed a day of physical activity	"I'm a failure. I will never lose weight and be happy."	Guilt, stop trying
Will never eat fries	Ate an order of fries	"I'll never be able to stop eating bad foods. Losing this weight is impossible."	Guilt, discouragement, self-doubt
Must follow my planned meals every day	Overate at a birthday party	"I can never control my appetite. I'm a horrible person."	Self-blame, low self-esteem
Must lose weight	Gained a pound	"I'm doomed. I can't keep from gaining weight."	Self-doubt, resignation

<b>Unrealistic goals and expectations with coping responses (p. 106)</b>				
<b>Goal or expectation</b>	<b>Comparing/ outcome</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>	<b>Coping response</b>	<b>Emotional Response</b>
Must do physical activity everyday	Missed a day of physical activity	"I'm a failure. I will never be physically active."	<b>Reframing.</b> "Missing one day of physical activity isn't really all that bad. I walked a lot at work today and I'll take time for a 15-minute walk tomorrow at lunch."	In control, self-confident, pleased with progress
Will never eat fries	Ate an order of fries	"I'll never be able to stop eating bad foods. Eating healthy is impossible."	<b>Reframing.</b> "Telling myself I will never eat fries is unrealistic. An occasional order of fries will not make that big a difference over the long run."	Confident, high self-esteem
Must follow my planned meals every day	Overate at a birthday party	"I can never control my appetite. I'm a horrible person."	<b>Reframing.</b> "It would be nice if I could keep my planned meals. An occasional slip means that I need to plan for unexpected situations or special occasions"	Energized to continue, in control, pleased about coping abilities
Must lose weight every week	Gained a pound	"I'm doomed. I can't keep from gaining weight."	<b>Reframing.</b> "I'd love to lose weight every week, but I know there will be weeks when this may not happen. When I gain weight, I'll focus a bit more on monitoring forms and my progress."	Pleased with realistic thinking, confident, pleased with progress.

### Review Checklist for Step 3

- Am I following the dietary guidelines for healthy eating?
- Are there any barriers for eating at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables and engaging in daily physical activity?
- Am I increasing my daily physical activity?
- Did I re-evaluate my goals to ensure that they remain realistic?

### Maintaining Previous Steps

- Have I been monitoring?
- Can I improve my monitoring?
- Are any patterns in my eating becoming obvious?
- Am I weighing myself once a week?
- Each day, am I planning regular meals and snacks? Do these meals include the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables?
- Am I trying to restrict my eating to the day's meals and snacks?
- Am I skipping any of the meals and snacks?
- Are the gaps between my meals and snacks no longer than three to four hours?
- Am I eating between my meals and snacks?
- Am I getting back on track when things go wrong?
- Am I adjusting the timing of my meals and snacks to accommodate special situations?
- Am I following the advice regarding self-induced vomiting and the misuse of laxatives and diuretics?
- Did I engage in physical activity?
- Have I set realistic goals for myself?

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# Step 4

Alternatives to binge eating and challenging dichotomous thinking about food and physical activity





### Checklist for Step 4

- Create a list of alternative activities to binge eating
- Carry this list of alternative activities with you to use in difficult times
- When the opportunity arises, use your list of alternative activities to binge eating
- Review the effectiveness of your alternative activities list
- Make any necessary improvements to your alternative activities list
- Challenge any dichotomous thinking about food and physical activity

### Alternatives to binge eating

An important skill to develop is the ability to resist urges to binge. In a previous step, you were trying to confine your eating to planned meals and snacks. While some people have little difficulty doing this, others have problems. To help you avoid eating between your planned meals and snacks, you will find it useful to have a range of alternative activities.

### **How to use alternative activities**

***Construct a list of alternative activities.*** You need to think of all those activities that are either incompatible with eating or make eating very difficult. These will differ from person to person, but here are some typical examples:

- Exercising, e.g., swimming, brisk walking, cycling, jogging, aerobics
- Going out with the children
- Taking a shower or bath
- Visiting or calling certain friends or relatives, especially anyone who is helping you with this program
- Playing music (Some people find they cannot binge when certain types of music are playing. They say the atmosphere is just not right)
- Read a book or magazine (non-food related)
- Play a game or work on a puzzle, try one that you can carry around with you, such as a word search

You need to devise a list that is appropriate for you. In general, the activities need to be active (i.e., involve doing something) rather than passive (such as watching television). Also, they should not feel like a chore; rather, they should be enjoyable. Some of these alternatives will help you meet your goals for daily physical activity as well.

***Write down a list of alternative activities on a small card and carry it around with you.*** This list should be available for use at difficult times.

***When you have an urge to eat between your planned meals and snacks take out your list of activities and work through them one by one.***

Three things should happen if you are to deal successfully with the urge to binge:

1. Time must pass. Urges to binge fade with time. Even half an hour may be long enough for the urge to decline sufficiently for you to resist it easily. So, you need to engage in something distracting for a while.
2. You must make it difficult for you to binge.
3. You must do something else, preferably something that is pleasurable.

You may find that at first the urge to binge takes quite a while to subside and disappear. However, you will notice that the urge fades more and more quickly as you practice engaging in alternative activities. Eventually it will disappear altogether or be so weak that you can easily ignore it.

### Challenging unhelpful thinking about food and physical activity



Some unhelpful thoughts you are likely to encounter while participating in this program are listed below:

**“I’m not losing weight.”**

Improvements in quality of life and physical health and reduction of binges, are the real measures of success in a program like this, but it is hard not to think about weight loss.

**“Small changes in my diet will not make a difference.”**

You might feel overwhelmed by all the information you have read, but changing your eating habits takes time. For example, if you eat no fruit and vegetables most days, start by adding just one serving a day, and make it an easy one. You can probably add a banana to your morning cereal, take an apple with you to work, or have a 6 oz. glass of orange juice for an afternoon snack. You can have a salad during lunch or add fresh veggies as an afternoon snack. Each week, try one small change you can live with. These small changes will yield big results over the long-term.

**“I have to clean my plate.”**

When you eat everything on the plate, you are at the mercy of the person doing the serving, even if you serve yourself. Given our cultural tendency to overdo it, you will usually be served more than enough. If you clean your plate, you are responding to the sight of food, and eating only stops when no more food is in sight. You can exert control by breaking the habit of cleaning your plate. Try to leave some food on your plate each time you eat. Leave only small portions if you like but leave a small amount of everything. This puts *you* in control of what you eat, not the chef.



**“I’m never going to reach my goal!”**

We all have an internal dialogue – the things that we say to ourselves – which can greatly affect your ability to make important lifestyle changes. Here are some examples of negative self-talk and ways to view them positively:

"I always knew I wouldn't make it to my goal," vs. "A reasonable goal for me is to increase my physical activity 5-10% of my starting levels. I'm actually doing pretty well."

"What good is this one-hour per week increase in physical activity?" vs. "The one-hour of physical activity is a big thing for me, and even some physical activity is better than none at all."

"I will never have a healthy lifestyle," vs. "I don't expect myself to be perfect in other areas of my life. It would be great to meet recommendations for physical activity and healthy eating but I focus on being better rather than being perfect."

"The program isn't working. I am just unable to make changes in my eating and physical activity," vs. "I can make small changes every day."

**Reflection Exercise:**

How can you reframe or adjust your thinking about some of your goals?

Choose one of the "unhelpful thinking" patterns listed above that you identify with and then write down a positive way to frame it differently.

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### Review Checklist for Step 4

- Did I create a list of alternative activities to binge eating?
- Do I carry this list with me to use in difficult times?
- When the opportunity arises, am I using my list of alternative activities?
- Am I reviewing the effectiveness of this alternative activities list?
- Have I challenged my dichotomous thinking about food and physical activity?

### Maintaining Previous Steps

- Have I been monitoring?
- Can I improve my monitoring?
- Are any patterns in my eating becoming obvious?
- Am I weighing myself once a week?
- Each day, am I planning regular meals and snacks?
- Am I trying to restrict my eating to the day's meals and snacks?
- Am I skipping any of the meals and snacks?
- Are the gaps between my meals and snacks no longer than three to four hours?
- Am I eating between my meals and snacks?
- Am I getting back on track when things go wrong?
- Am I adjusting the timing of my meals and snacks to accommodate special situations?
- Am I following the advice regarding self-induced vomiting and the misuse of laxatives and diuretics?
- Did I engage in daily physical activity?
- Did I eat the recommended daily amount of fruit?
- Did I eat the recommended daily amount of vegetables?
- Have I set realistic goals for myself?
- Am I following the dietary guidelines for healthy eating?
- Am I increasing my daily physical activity?
- Did I re-evaluate my goals to ensure that they remain realistic?

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# Step 5

Dieting vs. healthy eating, incorporating daily PA, challenging unrealistic expectations





### Checklist for Step 5

- Eat at regular intervals throughout the day
- Eat normal quantities of food and do not restrict the overall amount that you eat
- Practice eating any food (that you like) until you do not feel anxious about eating it
- Tackle other forms of avoidance
- Challenge any of your unrealistic expectations
- Set realistic goals for yourself

### Dieting vs. Healthy Eating

Reflect for a moment on the difference between going on a diet and changing your lifestyle. The lifestyle approach is the hallmark of this program, emphasizing gradual, sustainable, and permanent changes in eating, exercising, thinking, feeling, and acting. Many people think of weight management or stopping binge eating as “going on a diet.” Banish this thought from your mind, and think instead of making good food choices and being more physically active in enjoyable ways. This new way of thinking leaves the door open to be at peace with food, to enjoy being active, and to be happier and healthier. Better health, living longer, being more vital and energetic, sleeping better, and having more confidence are just a few of the other reasons to change eating and physical activity habits.

You have begun a new approach to achieve a healthy lifestyle. However, there are always additional positive changes you can make. You can start by eating sensible meals regularly throughout the day, including breakfast. Try cutting your portion sizes down and increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables to at least 5 per day



(total), as stated earlier in this program.

Nutrition is one key to successful healthy living. What you eat affects how you feel, whether you are healthy, and how you look. Making meals count is important. Your meals can be filling, nutritious, varied, delicious, and still be low in calories, sugar, and fat. For this however, you may have to do some advanced planning and make good food choices, but this is not difficult

to do. A little practice can go a long way to preparing and eating excellent meals. Adding variety to your meals can increase your eating pleasure. You can substitute soup for salad or replace vegetables and fruits from time to time to add variety. You may have turkey, fish, and chicken, and still enjoy delicious, low-calorie meals. Different foods contain different nutrients and other healthful substances. Therefore, eating a variety of healthy foods helps ensure that your body gets what it needs.

### HOW TO DEAL WITH STRICT DIETING

Approaching this program as a diet rather than a lifestyle change can be problematic. There are three main types of dieting which call for three different approaches to challenging these views.

#### Reflection Exercise:

Which diets have you tried in the past and what did they require of you?

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Return to this after you read about the three main types of dieting and reflect on the characteristics in light of what you have learned.

#### Trying Not to Eat for Long Periods of Time

You've already taken measures to tackle this behavior by establishing a pattern of regular eating. If you used to try not to eat for long periods of time, it is essential that you start to eat at regular intervals through the day. On the other hand, it is important that you remain flexible. The recommended pattern of eating is not meant to be rigid; it provides only general guidelines.

#### Trying to Restrict the Overall Amount of Food You Eat

The tendency to limit how much you eat - such as by setting a calorie limit - must be countered for two reasons. First, such dietary restriction is often so extreme that it inevitably encourages binge eating as a result of physiological pressures to eat. Certainly any diet that involves eating 1,200 calories a day or less will have this effect. Second, strict dieters set themselves very specific dietary goals, and they are prone to binge if they do not meet them. So, eating anything at all over 1,200 calories will represent failure. To tackle this form of dieting, you must first decide whether there is any need for you to restrict your calorie intake. There is no need for most people with binge eating problems to diet; indeed, it is unwise for them to do so since dieting makes them vulnerable to binge.

If you are afraid that you will overeat if you stop dieting, then you may need guidelines to determine what a "normal" amount to eat is. To help with this you could identify people of about your age (and gender) and see what they eat or you could follow the advice on food packages and in recipes. A friend or relative who is helping you with the program could also advise you.

## Trying to Avoid Certain Types of Food

It is especially important to tackle this form of dieting since it is particularly likely to lead people to binge. Avoiding foods - and often there are a great many of them - results in a narrowly restricted diet, and it makes people feel deprived. And, of course, eating these foods is one of the major triggers of binges.

In principle, food avoidance is the easiest form of dieting to tackle since all you have to do is introduce these foods into your diet. In practice, however, this is often easier said than done. For example, you may have become so used to not eating certain foods that you are no longer aware you are avoiding them. A first step therefore is to identify any foods you are denying yourself. The best way of doing this may seem rather odd, but it works. Go to a local supermarket that stocks most types and brands of food, and walk up and down the aisles, writing down in a notebook (other shoppers will think you are an employee!) all the foods that you like and that you would be reluctant to eat, either because of the effect they may have on your weight or shape or because you think eating them might trigger a binge. Then, at home, organize the list of foods (often it contains 40 or more items) into three or four groups according to the degree of difficulty that you would have eating them.



The next step is gradually to introduce these foods into your diet. Do so by including them in your planned meals and snacks. Do this only on days on when you feel in control, since otherwise they might trigger a binge. Start by introducing foods from the easiest of your three or four groups and focus on them for a couple of weeks. Then move to the next group and so on. Within six to eight weeks you should have incorporated all the foods into your diet. It usually does not matter how much of the food that you eat. Even a little will do. It tends to be the idea of having eaten the food that triggers binges rather than the amount itself.

Some people find doing this easy, but others do not. Either way, it requires sustained practice. You should keep introducing these foods until you no longer find it difficult. The time when you can stop is when eating these avoided foods no longer upset you. If you are not avoiding any foods, you are much less likely to binge.

**Meet Ana.** Ana is a woman who struggled with the practice of not avoiding certain foods. Read her story below.

“Ana knows that potato chips are a food that trigger her binges, and therefore she avoids potato chips completely. However, when Ana finds herself in a social situation (party, restaurant) where potato chips are present, she cannot fight the urge to binge. By attempting to completely avoid potato chips, Ana has actually allowed the potato chips to have ‘control’ over her. In practicing this step, Ana will learn how to regain the control over her eating the potato chips. First, Ana must not avoid the potato chips. Instead, she needs to practice how to build up this control.



So, she needs to go to the grocery store and buy a bag of potato chips. Then, she needs to precisely plan out when she is going to eat some chips and how many chips she will eat. (20 chips as my afternoon snack.) When this time comes, Ana should eat only the amount of chips she *previously* decided

on. Making these intentional decisions ahead of time will help Ana practice her control. After eating the twenty chips, Ana must try her hardest to not eat any more chips or to begin bingeing. It's important to note that Ana may feel some feelings of distress or anxiety about these chips. However, by practicing *how* to eat chips in the right way, Ana is learning how to control her eating of potato chips – instead of feeling as if the potato chips control her. Ana should continue practicing *how* to eat the potato chips in a controlled manner until she no longer feels intense distress or anxiety about the potato chips. This will likely take several weeks. As she succeeds with each practice attempt, it will demonstrate that potato chips no longer have the same “power” over her. At this point, she can remove the potato chips from her normal eating. However, if and when she encounters potato chips again, she will know *how* to engage in eating the potato chips without feeling distress, anxiety, or the urge to binge.”

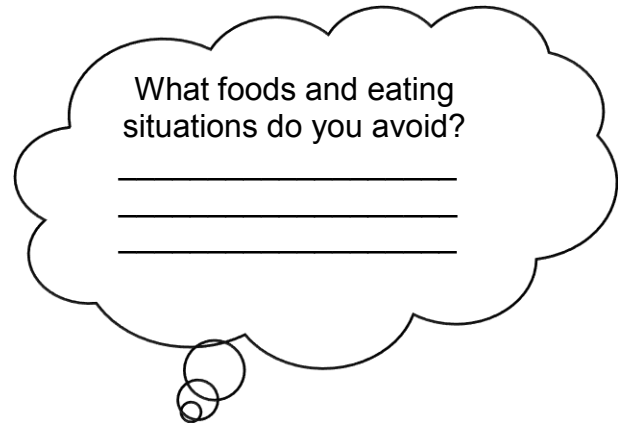
Of course, following this advice involves eating foods that you may regard as fattening or unhealthy. It is important that you persevere nonetheless. No foods are inherently fattening; it all depends on the amount of them that you eat. Introducing these foods will enhance your control over eating since you will be less likely to binge. As to their unhealthiness, it is clearly preferable to eat such foods in moderation than to eat large quantities in an uncontrolled fashion.

A point worth stressing is that you will not need to eat these foods forever. Rather, as soon as doing so stops making you anxious it would be reasonable to cut back on those foods that are accepted to be unhealthy (fats and simple carbohydrates), although it would be best not to exclude them altogether. In the long term you should be able to allow yourself to eat anything at times-nothing should be rigidly banned.

### **HOW TO DEAL WITH RELATED FORMS OF AVOIDANCE**

Most forms of dieting are, in essence, avoiding eating to influence appearance or weight. But many people with binge eating problems avoid other situations related to eating, and this may also perpetuate binge eating problems. Two common examples are avoiding eating with other people and avoiding eating foods when you're uncertain of their calorie content. To overcome your binge eating problem, it is important that you tackle all forms of avoidance of eating. It should be obvious what situations you are avoiding. You just have to ask yourself whether there are any situations involving eating that make you anxious. If so, you need to address them. The way to tackle such anxiety-provoking situations is the same in principle as that for tackling food avoidance. You work out a graded plan for introducing yourself to these situations in a way that will not cause you undue stress. For example, to tackle anxiety over eating with others, you might establish the following progressive goals:

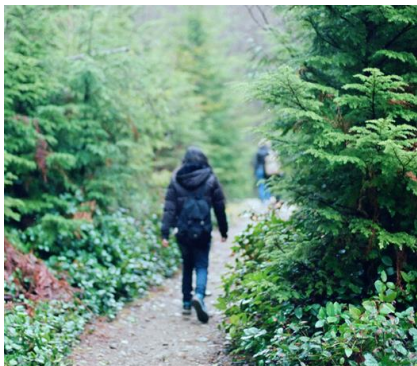
- Eat at home with the friend/relative who is helping you with the program
- Eat in an unthreatening restaurant with this person
- Eat in an unthreatening restaurant with another person with whom you are comfortable
- Eat in an unthreatening restaurant with people who are prone to make you anxious (e.g., your parents, relatives)
- Eat in a threatening environment with people who are prone to make you anxious (e.g., eat at home with your parents)



Then start at the easiest (or least difficult) level and practice. Once you can accomplish it without undue anxiety, you should move on to the next level and practice it, and so on. You have finished the process once you have practiced so often that the overall situation no longer makes you particularly anxious and you no longer wish to avoid it.

### Incorporating Daily Physical Activity

As previously discussed, physical activity helps reduce your risk for some diseases, facilitates long-term weight management, improves your mood, and well-being, and



you can take advantage of its benefits by doing something as simple as walking. By adding 30 minutes of walking to your daily routine you can take off 12 pounds in a year; 60 pounds in five years; and 120 pounds in 10 years. Small increases in physical activity can really help you lose weight and keep it off. This happens for biological reasons but also because you feel better about yourself. Consider purchasing a helpful device called a pedometer, which measures motion and calculates the number of steps you take. You can record your

daily number of steps in your monitoring log. A step counter has a simple but very important purpose – to keep you motivated and to give you positive feedback about increases in physical activity. For optimal health, some experts recommend an ultimate goal of 10,000 steps per day.

### Challenging unrealistic expectations

Setting realistic goals is important. It gives you something to strive for and a standard against which to measure your progress. Challenging unrealistic goals and expectations allows you to focus on more achievable goals and improves likelihood for success. Making gradual changes is often easier and less daunting than making drastic changes all at once. When you succeed at making small changes, you gain confidence in your ability to change. Let's look at an example of how this works. If

your weakness is donuts and you begin everyday with three of your favorite kind, dropping them completely may be difficult. You could start by cutting down to two donuts, then one, and finally to none. Similarly, it is highly encouraged to start with a manageable level of physical activity and then gradually add 5-10 minutes (or 200 steps) of physical activity until you reach your ultimate goal of 30-60 minutes (or 10,000 steps) per day. If you jump right in and set a goal to do 60 minutes of activity every day, when you haven't been very active recently, you might injure yourself or feel discouraged when you fail to reach your goal. Remember this will become a lifelong habit, so you have plenty of time to reach your ultimate goal!

### Review Checklist for Step 5

- Am I eating at regular intervals throughout the day?
- Am I eating normal quantities of food, or am I restricting the overall amount that I eat?
- Am I able to eat any food (that I like) without feeling anxious?
- Am I tackling other forms of avoidance?
- Am I challenging any of my unrealistic expectations?
- Have I set realistic goals for myself?

### Maintaining Previous Steps

- Have I been monitoring?
- Can I improve my monitoring?
- Are any patterns in my eating becoming obvious?
- Am I weighing myself once a week?
- Each day, am I planning regular meals and snacks?
- Am I trying to restrict my eating to the day's meals and snacks?
- Am I skipping any of the meals and snacks?
- Are the gaps between my meals and snacks no longer than three to four hours?
- Am I eating between my meals and snacks?
- Am I getting back on track when things go wrong?
- Am I adjusting the timing of my meals and snacks to accommodate special situations?
- Am I following the advice regarding self-induced vomiting and the misuse of laxatives and diuretics?
- Did I engage in physical activity?
- Did I eat the recommended amount of fruit?
- Did I eat the recommended amount of vegetables?
- Have I set realistic goals for myself?
- Am I following the dietary guidelines for healthy eating?
- Am I increasing my daily physical activity?
- Did I re-evaluate my goals to ensure that they remain realistic?
- Did I create a list of alternative activities to binge eating?
- Do I carry this list with me to use in difficult times?
- When the opportunity arises, am I using my list of alternative activities?
- Am I reviewing the effectiveness of this alternative activities list?
- Have I challenged my dichotomous thinking about food and physical activity?

NOTES:

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# Step 6

Problem solving, developing alternative coping strategies, and the importance of social support for maintaining behavior change



### Checklist for Step 6

- Problem-solve whenever a difficult time occurs
- When problem-solving, follow the “Six Steps of Efficient Problem Solving”
- Review your problem solving the next day
- Establish a social support system

### Problem Solving and Developing Alternative Coping Strategies

Binges do not generally occur at random. As described previously, they are often triggered by unpleasant events or circumstances, or types of food. People who binge tend to be particularly prone to do so at times of stress. Therefore, it is important that you develop skills for dealing with those day-to-day problems that might otherwise trigger binges.

Do you binge in response to problems? To answer this question you need to review your monitoring records and consider the circumstances surrounding your binges. If you can see that binges tend to be triggered by outside events, you need to develop your problem solving skills. Even if your binges are not generally triggered by external forces, most people find that problem solving skills are useful in many areas, so working on them can only enhance your life.

This concept also applies to fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity. It's important to notice patterns in your eating and physical activity and be able to deal with problems getting in the way of improving your lifestyle.

#### **Checking In:**

What patterns have you noticed with your binge episodes? What about fruit/vegetable consumption or physical activity?

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Efficient problem solving requires six steps:

### **The Six Steps of Efficient Problem Solving**

Step 1. Identify the problem as early as possible.

Step 2. Specify the problem accurately.

Step 3. Consider as many solutions as possible.

Step 4. Think through the implications of each solution.

Step 5. Choose the best solution or combination of solutions.

Step 6. Act on the solution.

Afterward, review the entire problem solving process.

**Step 1 - Identify the problem as early as possible.** Spotting problems early prevents them from overwhelming you. You may receive clues that a problem is developing. Maybe you are feeling fed up with trying to engage in physical activity and eat fruits and vegetables daily or you are beginning to have an urge to binge. *Experiences like these usually indicate a problem*, so whenever you feel like this you should look for the problem behind it. The problem may be external, such as a stressor at work or with your partner, or it may be internal, such as a shift in mood. In both situations, it is important to identify the cause of the problem and how it made you feel (e.g., anxious, angry, depressed, surprised, etc.). Sometimes you will find that there is more than one problem. When this is the case, separate the two and deal with them independently, since their solutions may differ.

**Step 2 - Specify the problem accurately.** Working out the true nature of a problem is essential if you are to find the right solution. For example, you might feel that a problem is the fact that you have an urge to binge. Actually that urge is your reaction to the true problem, which is that you have nothing to do all evening and you are tired. So the problem is "I have nothing to do this evening and I am tired." Be specific about naming the problem that is hindering your success.

**Step 3 - Consider as many solutions as possible.** Do not censor yourself at this stage; try to think of all possible solutions. You are more likely to come up with a good one if you do so. Returning to our example, you might come up with these potential solutions:

- Watch TV
- Go to bed
- Go for a jog
- Call some friends to see if they are free
- Clean the apartment
- Go for a drive

**Step 4 - Think through the implications of each solution.** Staying with our example, here are the potential ramifications of adopting each solution listed:

- Watch TV - This is not a great idea since there is nothing worth watching and I will therefore get bored. This will make the risk of binge eating even greater.

- Go to bed - This is also not a good idea. It is how I react when I am fed up, but it solves nothing. Indeed, it makes me feel worse. What tends to happen is that it makes me feel even sorrier for myself. It makes me feel like a failure, and eventually I get up and binge.
- Go for a jog - This is not a bad idea in principle, but given my present weight I don't enjoy jogging. I feel uncomfortable, and I look awful. I suppose that instead I could go for a brisk walk. This would serve the same function since it would help me let off steam while I would also feel good about having done physical activity.
- Call some friends to see if they are free - This is not a bad idea either. When I feel this way, I usually hide away, but if someone calls me it often cheers me up, especially if we can arrange to meet. Why should I wait for them to call me? I could just as well call them. If they are busy, they can always say so.
- Clean the apartment-The apartment certainly does need cleaning, but I am tired and it is the end of the day. I don't have to do "productive" things all the time.
- Go for a drive-This would be risky. Driving aimlessly around would be bound to end up with my buying food and eating it. This is not a good idea.

**Step 5 - Choose the best solution or combination of solutions.** Choosing the best solution is often not difficult. If you have come up with a number of potential solutions and carefully thought through their implications, the best solution or combination of solutions is usually obvious.

Returning to the example, you decide that calling some friends and then exercising are the best solutions.

**Step 6 - Act on the solution.** The final step is to act. But remember, you do not have to stick rigidly to the chosen solution. If it turns out not to be a good idea, the solutions that you considered at Steps 3 and 4 of the problem solving process should have given you other options.

**Looking back.** To become an efficient problem solver, you must take one crucial final step: **Review the entire problem solving process afterward, usually the next day, to see whether you could have done it any better.** It is important to stress that the issue is not whether you solved the individual problem, although this is relevant, but rather whether your problem solving could have been any better. Maybe you overcame the problem but didn't problem solve very well (for example, you thought of just one possible solution and got on with it). While this might feel like a success, it is a short-term way of looking at things. It is important to remember that *the goal is to become good at problem solving in general so that you have this skill at hand for dealing with future difficulties.*

Returning to our example, say you first called three friends, one of whom you had not spoken to for some time. Two of them were in. Neither was free to meet there and then, but you caught up with each other's news and made arrangements to meet in the next week or so. You then forced yourself to go out for a long fast walk. You were out for nearly forty-five minutes. This made you feel tired, but in a different way from how you had been feeling before. You felt healthier and happier, and the urge to binge had gone. You then had a long shower. By this time it was 9:15 PM and time for your planned evening snack. After the snack you decided to watch TV for an hour even if there was nothing worth watching and then have an early night. This you did.

The next day you reviewed your problem solving. You considered each step one by one. You thought that you could have done better at identifying the problem as early as possible. Looking back, you saw that it would have been perfectly possible to spot the problem in the afternoon, before you left work. On the other hand, you dealt with the other five steps pretty well. It certainly demonstrated that you could intervene in such a situation, whereas previously you simply would have had a binge and then felt even worse.

### The Importance of Social Support for Maintaining Behavior Change

Two people working together can produce a synergy where each motivates the other and in turn enhances self-motivation. Some people like to make changes on their own, while others like aid and support from family and friends. You are in the best position to decide what works best for you. Consider the support from others as a resource to be cultivated. Support from others is a resource only if you find it helpful. A walking partner is an example of a terrific way to gain support. Support is helpful for many reasons. Just feeling cared for may help by inspiring you to lead a healthier lifestyle, to do things that make you happier, and perhaps even influence other positive change.



One reason social support can be so powerful is that it comes in many forms. Emotional support is one such form. It involves the caring, understanding, acceptance, kindness we receive from others. Talking with family members and close friends about your journey through this program can be very helpful. As you continue to make lifestyle changes, friends and family members may become even more interested in your positive growth. You may also want to tell friends and family members how they can support you. Little things such as inviting you to go on a walk or not offering you snack foods can make a big difference. Partnerships can be very powerful. Express your appreciation when loved ones support you.

### Review Checklist for Step 6

- Am I problem-solving frequently enough?
- When I problem-solve, am I doing it properly?
- Am I reviewing my problem-solving the next day?
- Have I established a social support system?

### Maintaining Previous Steps

- Have I been monitoring?
- Can I improve my monitoring?
- Are any patterns in my eating becoming obvious?
- Am I weighing myself once a week?
- Each day, am I planning regular meals and snacks?
- Am I trying to restrict my eating to the day's meals and snacks?
- Am I skipping any of the meals and snacks?
- Are the gaps between my meals and snacks no longer than three to four hours?
- Am I eating between my meals and snacks?
- Am I getting back on track when things go wrong?
- Am I adjusting the timing of my meals and snacks to accommodate special situations?
- Am I following the advice regarding self-induced vomiting and the misuse of laxatives and diuretics?
- Did I engage in physical activity?
- Did I eat the recommended amount of fruit?
- Did I eat the recommended amount of vegetables?
- Have I set realistic goals for myself?
- Am I following the dietary guidelines for healthy eating?
- Am I increasing my daily physical activity?
- Did I re-evaluate my goals to ensure that they remain realistic?
- Did I create a list of alternative activities to binge eating?
- Do I carry this list with me to use in difficult times?
- When the opportunity arises, am I using my list of alternative activities?
- Am I reviewing the effectiveness of this alternative activities list?
- Have I challenged my dichotomous thinking about food and physical activity?
- Am I eating at regular intervals throughout the day?
- Am I eating normal quantities of food, or am I restricting the overall amount that I eat?
- Am I able to eat any food (that I like) without feeling anxious?
- Am I tackling other forms of avoidance?
- Am I challenging any of my unrealistic expectations?

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# Step 7

Body image concerns, cultural and social pressures for body image and eating, progress review, deciding what else needs to be tackled and other barriers to change



### Checklist for Step 7

- Monitor your body image
- Reflect on any patterns in your body image
- Evaluate your progress in the program

### Body Image Concerns

How we think is central to who we are as people. How we think affects how we feel, and our thoughts and feelings are key drivers of our behavior. Eating and exercising are behaviors, so thinking right goes a long way toward acting right. Examples of positive thoughts about your body image and weight are:

- Interpreting your progress in a realistic way
- Having positive, but realistic expectations
- Recovering from slips
- Thinking about your weight, your eating, your physical activity, and your body in a constructive way.

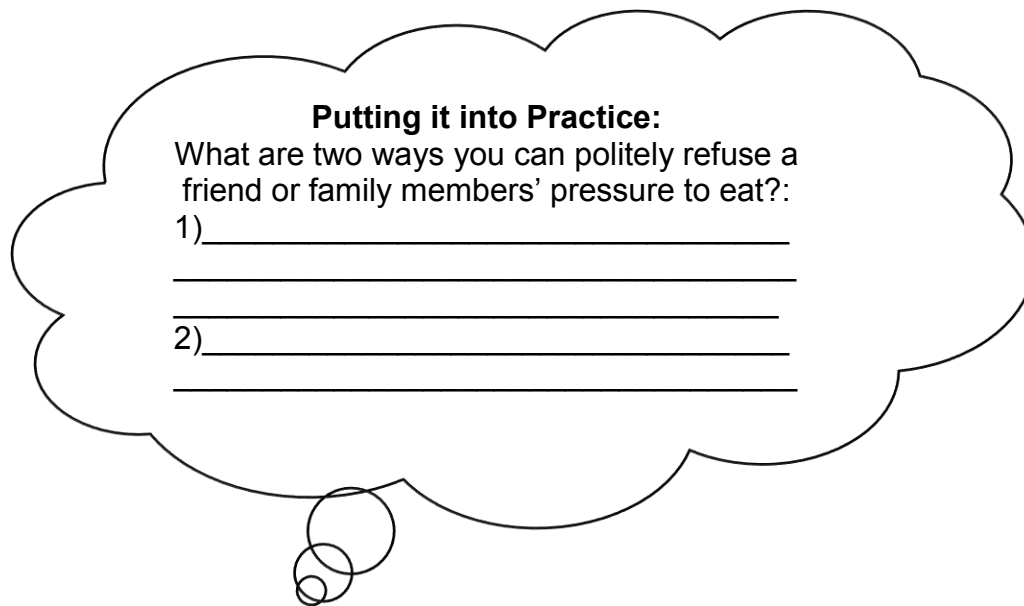
It is important to view what you have done in a positive context. There is no reason to expect perfection. Society teaches us that weight is under total control of the individual; hence, we have ideals that are highly unrealistic. It would be like saying there is only one acceptable hairstyle and that people with other styles were imperfect and weren't trying hard enough to change the way they looked. You may be one of the many people who would like to weigh much less but will not or cannot. The choice, then, is whether to wage a wholesale assault on your self-esteem by feeling there is something wrong with you or to accept what is reasonable and feel good about the progress you have made.

It may be helpful to record your body image in your monitoring log. This may help you realize any patterns, such as if your body image changes when you are hungry, after you eat, or in certain situations.

### Cultural and Social Pressures for Body Image and Eating

A major challenge for individuals losing weight is coping with pressure to eat or to maintain a certain body type. Friends, relatives, and strangers – some well-meaning and some not – can make it difficult to lose weight by encouraging you to eat. They may be unaware that offering food might tempt you, may be uncomfortable eating in front of you, may be jealous of your success, may not want you to succeed or they want to test your determination. When others pressure you to eat or conform to body ideals, stand up for yourself and refuse. Many people associate food with love, and encouraging you to eat is one way to show concern. Assure them that you are fine. Avoid being aggressive or insulting, even if you suspect evil motives. The polite approach works best. After a few polite refusals, most people will learn that their pressures will not work, and they will quit pestering you. If you have trouble being assertive, try to predict the situations where others may pressure you to eat. Plan a

response, and practice it so that when the situation arises, you are prepared to be polite but firm.



**Putting it into Practice:**

What are two ways you can politely refuse a friend or family members' pressure to eat?:

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Review of Progress

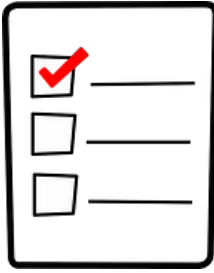
The first and perhaps the most important lifestyle behavior you learned in this program is record keeping. You have been keeping records of your eating, physical activity, and weight. Studies have shown that individuals who keep records do better than those who do not; hence, record keeping is one predictor of success. If you are one who resists keeping records, chances are that you may need this the most. Moreover, you may be surprised by how much you have and will continue to benefit from keeping good records. Record keeping will help increase the awareness of your eating and physical activity and how they affect your weight. Here is why records help: you become aware of what you eat, you increase control over eating, your eating patterns become clear, and you can track success in implementing healthy behaviors like physical activity and eating fruits and vegetables. Research has shown this to be one of the most, if not the most, important part of lifestyle change.

This is the point in the program when you should stand back and review your progress in detail. To do so you will need your monitoring sheets.

### **Is the Program Helping?**

**By now, if the program is going to help you, you should see definite signs that you are benefiting.** Three main outcomes are likely. Work out which applies to you.

**Outcome 1.** If the frequency of your binges has clearly decreased and physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption have increased, you should continue with the program. These are very promising signs, and you are doing well.



**Outcome 2.** If you are doing your best to change, a good measure of which is the number of good days you are having each week, yet the frequency of your binges, physical activity or healthy eating has not changed significantly, the program is not right for you. Instead, you should seriously consider getting outside help.

**Outcome 3.** If you are not benefiting in terms of your eating or physical activity, but you can also see that you are not following the program as well as you could, you need to question your commitment to change. It would be a good idea to reread the section "Why Change?" at the beginning of this program. If you decide that you really do want to change, you should seriously consider restarting the program, perhaps after a short break. On the other hand, if you are unsure whether you want to change - perhaps it all seems to take too much effort or this is the wrong time - it might be better to stop for the meantime. You can always restart at some point in the future.

### Other Barriers to Change

A highly respected psychologist at Stanford University, Albert Bandura, developed a concept known as self-efficacy; it has two parts. The first states that an individual's chance of accomplishing a goal depends on having the skills to make the change. The second part is whether the individual has the confidence that the changes can occur. This idea applies beautifully to living a healthy lifestyle. Thinking helpful thoughts and looking at the world in a constructive way are skills that you can cultivate so that when you encounter inevitable barriers to change, you have a mindset that helps you to overcome.

### **Changes in Weight**

By now, it should also be clear what is happening to your weight. Most people find that there has been little or no change, although there may have been fluctuations from week to week. Be sure to evaluate if you fall into one of these categories:

*If your weight has decreased by more than five pounds,* it is important to check that you are not now underweight. If you are, see your physician, explain what you have been doing, and get advice. You must consider whether you are losing weight because you are eating too little in your meals and snacks. This is a potential problem since it will limit your progress.

*If your weight has increased by more than about five pounds,* you need to check two things. The first is whether the weight gain is arising because you are recovering from having been under-weight. You may have started the program at a low weight compared to your natural weight, and now that you are beginning to eat more healthily your weight is returning to its natural level. This is a good thing although you may be finding it difficult to tolerate. Second, check if you are now "overweight," medically speaking. Appendix II explains how to tell and provides specific advice if this is the case.

### Review Checklist for Step 7

- Have I been monitoring my body image?
- Are there any patterns in my body image becoming obvious?
- Have I evaluated my progress in the program?

### Maintaining Previous Steps

- Have I been monitoring?
- Can I improve my monitoring?
- Are any patterns in my eating becoming obvious?
- Am I weighing myself once a week?
- Each day, am I planning regular meals and snacks?
- Am I trying to restrict my eating to the day's meals and snacks?
- Am I skipping any of the meals and snacks?
- Are the gaps between my meals and snacks no longer than three to four hours?
- Am I eating between my meals and snacks?
- Am I getting back on track when things go wrong?
- Am I adjusting the timing of my meals and snacks to accommodate special situations?
- Am I following the advice regarding self-induced vomiting and the misuse of laxatives and diuretics?
- Did I engage in physical activity?
- Did I eat the recommended amount of fruit?
- Did I eat the recommended amount of vegetables?
- Have I set realistic goals for myself?
- Am I following the dietary guidelines for healthy eating?
- Am I increasing my daily physical activity?
- Did I re-evaluate my goals to ensure that they remain realistic?
- Did I create a list of alternative activities to binge eating?
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- Am I reviewing the effectiveness of this alternative activities list?
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- Am I eating normal quantities of food, or am I restricting the overall amount that I eat?
- Am I able to eat any food (that I like) without feeling anxious?
- Am I tackling other forms of avoidance?
- Am I challenging any of my unrealistic expectations?
- Am I problem solving frequently enough?
- When I problem-solve, am I doing it properly?
- Am I reviewing my problem solving the next day?
- Have I established a social support system

NOTES:

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# Step 8

Acknowledging progress, maintaining changes, how to manage setbacks, and relapse prevention



### Checklist for Step 8

- Acknowledge your progress in the program
- Maintain the changes you have made
- Manage setbacks that may occur
- Prevent relapse to previous unhealthy behaviors

### Acknowledging Progress and Maintaining Changes

Pay attention to the changes you make, reward yourself for them, and make sure you consider changes in energy, sleep, vitality, and how you feel about yourself when you stop to size up your progress. *There is much to be proud of!!* Remember to reward yourself, even with a few kind words. People are notoriously reluctant to reward themselves. Yet, you can be your biggest fan – you know how much time and effort you have invested in making important changes. However, refrain from using food as a reward.

### **If Binge Eating, Lack of Physical Activity or Unhealthy Eating Is Still a Problem**

If binge eating, other unhealthy eating habits and a lack of physical activity are still interfering with your quality of life, you should seriously consider getting further help. The fact that the program did not help or did so only to a limited degree does not mean that the problem cannot be overcome. Far from it! There are many other treatment options, and you must not give up.

### **If You Have Improved or Recovered**

In the short term - for about the next six months - you should continue to employ the strategies that you have found most helpful. Also continue to hold regular review sessions, perhaps every two weeks, to assess your progress. It is impossible to give firm recommendations regarding when to stop monitoring. The best advice is to stop when it is no longer relevant. However, you must beware of stopping because you do not want to face up to the fact that you still have problems or that things are deteriorating. On the other hand, if your behaviors are stable and satisfactory, there is no need to monitor.

### **Maintaining Changes**

Throughout this program you have been changing fundamental behaviors and attitudes that affect your eating and physical activity. You may feel more alert and energetic or may be sleeping better. People frequently report such changes soon after they begin a healthier diet and become more physically active.

One thing to be aware of is the role of stress in maintaining these changes. A very interesting paradox is that stress makes some people eat more and some people eat less. Clear links exist between stress and health. Stress can affect many aspects of health, from the common cold to chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and

asthma. It is reasonable to believe that reducing stress would make many people happier and healthier. In addition, less stress would facilitate control over eating, physical activity and weight. In order to maintain the lifestyle changes that you have made, you can respond to stress with activities other than eating. When a person uses food to take the edge off stress, and this behavior is repeated over and over; the association could become automatic. There are many other ways you could cope with stress whether this means listening to music, reading a good book, going for a walk, connecting with a friend, meditation or something else. Having several constructive activities at hand so that you know exactly how to respond when stress triggers the desire to eat can be very helpful. Another solution could be to reduce stress. Stress reduction may affect not only your eating, but other areas of your life as well. Research has shown that even a single bout of physical activity reduces stress. The events in life do not cause stress; our thoughts about the events cause stress. Changing your thoughts and behaviors to respond to stress can change your experience of stress and improve the likelihood of maintaining positive change.

**Reflection Exercise:**

List three possible stress-relief activities  
that fit with your lifestyle and interests

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

### How to Manage Setbacks and Relapse Prevention

#### **PREVENTING RELAPSE**

##### **Having Realistic Expectations**

It is common for people who have stopped binge eating, adopted healthy eating and increased physical activity to hope that they will never engage in unhealthy behaviors again. While this hope is understandable, it is neither helpful nor realistic. You should regard your unhealthy habits as an Achilles' heel. You will still be prone to react this way at times of stress. With luck it will be very much in the background and will not affect your everyday life. Nevertheless, it may recur, and you need to be prepared.

##### **Distinguishing a Lapse from a Relapse**

How you deal with future problems is central to the successful prevention of relapses. A particularly important distinction to be made is that between a lapse and a relapse. A lapse is a setback or a slip, whereas a relapse is returning to square one.

The two terms have different connotations. Implicit in the notion of a lapse is the idea that there can be degrees of deterioration. On the other hand the notion of a relapse suggests that one has either recovered or not. This type of thinking should be familiar by now; it is another example of unhelpful all-or-nothing (dichotomous) thinking. To minimize the chances of relapsing, it is important not to label lapses as relapses, since doing so is likely to affect your behavior. If you think you have had a lapse, you are likely to take steps to get back on track. If you regard yourself as having relapsed, you may well give up, and as a result matters will get worse.

### Knowing How to Deal with Setbacks

**1. Spot the problem early.** It should be obvious if things are deteriorating since the frequency of your binge eating will increase and both physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption will decrease. Your task, therefore, is to respond to these changes and their causes. Do not turn a blind eye, hoping that the setback will be temporary. Instead, assume that there is a problem and take steps to do something about it.

**2. Reinstitute the program.** To nip the lapse in the bud, it is important that you reinstitute the program as soon as possible. Be your own therapist. Reread the program and restart monitoring and whatever other procedures seem appropriate. Review your progress every few days. Problems caught early are much easier to solve than those that have been allowed to take hold.



**3. Identify any source of stress.** It may be obvious what has led to the setback, or it may not be at all clear. Either way, think carefully about what might have precipitated the problem and tackle it using the problem solving approach described earlier in the program. Also, review steps frequently. With this approach, you can overcome most lapses. If you are not succeeding, however, do not delay seeking professional help.

### Reducing Vulnerability

Confidence is a big part of this picture. If you are confident that you can handle high-risk situations, bounce back when you falter, and keep your motivation high, you'll have the strength to hang in there when things get tough. You will approach situations with a new sense of control. The key to successful weight and binge eating management of course is maintenance of lifestyle changes that led to positive changes in the first place! Your overall health will continue to improve as you continue to practice the healthy lifestyle behaviors you have learned. What a wonderful accomplishment – to improve your health and well-being! However, be careful about unhelpful thinking. For example, coming home tired and watching television until bedtime one evening when you had planned to go for a nice long walk may trigger feelings of being a failure, which in turn could lead to an “it's no use” attitude, resulting in giving up completely. There will be setbacks, but this is when one has to acknowledge their progress and keep moving forward!

Be aware that satisfaction may come more slowly in other related areas, such as with your social life or leisure and recreational activities. If you have specific desires in these areas, such as meeting new people or taking up tennis or golf, make a plan for how you can start achieving these goals. Do not make the mistake of thinking you have to be at some magical goal weight or strict standard of eating in order to socialize more or take up a new hobby. Also, make room for flexibility in how you evaluate successfully accomplishing your goals. You may notice changes in how your clothes fit before the scale changes all that much. Feeling positive about what you have accomplished, no matter how small it may seem, is important.

*Practice and awareness are key!* Eating and physical activity habits develop over years and years, so you must be patient for the changes to become permanent. Be aware of what stimulates your eating and inactivity and of techniques for turning the tide. Remember successful long-term lifestyle changes and abstinence from binge eating depends on being able to get back on track after the inevitable detours and roadblocks that arise along this healthy lifestyle path.



### Review Checklist for Step 8

- Have I acknowledged my progress in the program?
- Have I maintained the changes I have made?
- Have I managed setbacks that occurred and/or created a plan to manage setbacks?
- Have I prevented relapse to previous unhealthy behaviors?

### Maintaining Previous Steps

- Have I been monitoring?
- Can I improve my monitoring?
- Are any patterns in my eating becoming obvious?
- Am I weighing myself once a week?
- Each day, am I planning regular meals and snacks?
- Am I trying to restrict my eating to the day's meals and snacks?
- Am I skipping any of the meals and snacks?
- Are the gaps between my meals and snacks no longer than three to four hours?
- Am I eating between my meals and snacks?
- Am I getting back on track when things go wrong?
- Am I adjusting the timing of my meals and snacks to accommodate special situations?
- Am I following the advice regarding self-induced vomiting and the misuse of laxatives and diuretics?
- Did I engage in physical activity?
- Did I eat the recommended amount of fruit?
- Did I eat the recommended amount of vegetables?
- Have I set realistic goals for myself?
- Am I following the dietary guidelines for healthy eating?
- Am I increasing my daily physical activity?
- Did I re-evaluate my goals to ensure that they remain realistic?
- Did I create a list of alternative activities to binge eating?
- Do I carry this list with me to use in difficult times?
- When the opportunity arises, am I using my list of alternative activities?
- Am I reviewing the effectiveness of this alternative activities list?

### Review Checklist for Step 8 Continued

- Have I challenged my dichotomous thinking about food and physical activity?  
Am I eating at regular intervals throughout the day?
- Am I eating normal quantities of food, or am I restricting the overall amount that I eat?
- Am I able to eat any food (that I like) without feeling anxious?
- Am I tackling other forms of avoidance?
- Am I challenging any of my unrealistic expectations?
- Am I problem solving frequently enough?
- When I problem-solve, am I doing it properly?
- Am I reviewing my problem solving the next day?
- Have I established a social support system?
- Have I been monitoring my body image?
- Are there any patterns in my body image becoming obvious?
- Have I evaluated my progress in the program?



NOTES:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

This manual is partly taken from Fairburn, C. G. (1995). *Overcoming binge eating*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, and from Brownell, K. D. (2004). *The LEARN program for weight management: The 10<sup>th</sup> edition*. [Dallas, TX: American Health Publishing Company].



## Appendix A: Tips for Healthy Eating

### Use the plate method to plan meals

#### ❖ Use the entire plate for lunch and dinner



- Fill 1/2 of your plate with non-starchy vegetables like broccoli, carrots and/or cactus (2 or more vegetable servings)
- Fill 1/4 of your plate with protein foods (2-3 ounces of fish, poultry or lean meat)
- Fill 1/4 of your plate with starchy carbohydrate foods such as tortillas, bread, rice, beans or starchy vegetables (2-3 starch servings)
- Add a medium piece of fruit (1 fruit serving) and/or 8 ounces of skim or low-fat milk (1 milk serving), which are additional carbohydrate choices
- Use 1-2 teaspoons of heart-healthy vegetable oil or tub margarine or 1/8 -1/4 small avocado (1-2 fat servings)
- Add a bowl of salad if you're still hungry (1 or more vegetable servings)









#### ❖ For breakfast, fill two quarters of the plate but not the other half.

- Fill 1/4 of your plate with starchy foods such as tortillas, whole grain cereal or, whole grain bread (2-3 starch servings)
- Fill 1/4 of your plate with protein foods such nut butter, eggs or lean meat (1-2 meat or meat substitute servings)
- Add a medium piece of fruit (1 fruit serving) and/or 8 ounces of skim or low-fat milk (1 milk serving), which are additional carbohydrate choices
- Use 1-2 teaspoons of heart-healthy vegetable oil or tub margarine or 1/8 -1/4 small avocado (1-2 fat servings)

### Have a regular schedule and pattern of eating

- ❖ Eat the same amount of food at the same time every day.
- ❖ Eat three well-balanced meals per day.
- ❖ Meal times should be four to six hours apart.
- ❖ Try to avoid eating between meals unless a snack is included in your meal plan.
- ❖ **DO NOT SKIP MEALS.**

## Control portions using common items

<p>1/2 cup of cooked rice, potato or beans = 1/2 baseball (1 serving of starchy carbohydrate or starchy vegetable) <b>You need 6-10 of these per day</b></p>	
<p>1 cup of cooked broccoli = a fist (2 servings of non-starchy vegetables) <b>You need 4 or more of these per day</b></p>	
<p>1 medium fruit = a baseball (1 serving of fruit) <b>You need 2-4 of these per day</b></p>	
<p>1 1/2 ounces of low-fat or fat-free cheese = 4 stacked dice (1 serving of nonfat or low-fat milk or dairy) <b>You need 3-4 of these per day</b></p>	
<p>3 ounces of meat = palm of a woman's hand (3 servings of chicken, fish or lean meat) <b>You need 1-2 of these per day</b></p>	
<p>2 tablespoons of peanut butter = a ping-pong ball (1 serving of a meat substitute) <b>Replace with meat as necessary</b></p>	
<p>1/2 cup of ice cream = 1/2 baseball (1 serving of a "fun" food) <b>This is an optional food</b></p>	
<p>1 teaspoon of heart-healthy margarine or oil = one thumb (1 serving of fat) <b>You need 3-6 of these per day</b></p>	

## **Appendix B: Shape and Weight Concerns**

### **DEALING WITH SHAPE AND WEIGHT CONCERNS**

Having a negative body image or extreme concerns about body shape and weight is a common problem in our society (see pages 55-58 of *Overcoming Binge Eating*). You may want to lose weight or are terrified of gaining weight. You probably dislike particular parts of your body. You may wish for a flatter stomach, thinner thighs, or narrower hips. The result is that you are preoccupied with thoughts about your body shape and weight. You also feel bad about your body. And these thoughts and feelings can negatively impact your behavior and psychological well-being.

Extreme concern about body shape and weight can lead to unhealthy dieting as shown in Figure 10 on page 58 of *Overcoming Binge Eating*. Step 5 of this program gives you some strategies for overcoming unhealthy dieting. Also, this extreme concern can result in you weighing yourself several times a day, or going to the other extreme of avoiding weighing yourself altogether. Overcoming this sort of dysfunctional pattern of weighing was a target of this treatment program in Step 1.

But weighing yourself too often or not at all are only two examples of a range of potentially problematic body-checking or body avoidance behaviors. You might constantly check to see how fat you are. This is called body checking. Alternatively, you might avoid seeing your body or letting others see it. This is called body avoidance. Perhaps you engage in both of these activities at different times. You may not only avoid certain social situations or activities, but also sometimes feel intense dislike for your body. These behaviors are also often habitual. You may have been doing them so frequently that they have become automatic. You just do them. The problem is that these actions are self-defeating—they keep you trapped in a heightened state of concern or distress about your body.



In this handout, we give you guidance for overcoming these behaviors and dealing with distressing body shape and weight concerns. Negative thoughts about your body are common because of the emphasis on appearance in our culture. But you will learn to reduce the intensity of these thoughts and keep them short-lived and limited by not engaging in actions that reinforce shape and weight concerns.

As with other elements of the self-help program described in this manual, the following information or parts of it may not necessarily apply to you specifically. This information may be helpful if you define yourself primarily in terms of your appearance, regardless of your actual weight.

## BODY CHECKING

### Do you regularly do any of the following?

1. Spend a lot of time looking at specific parts of your body (e.g., stomach, hips) in the mirror?
2. Weigh yourself several times a day?
3. Pinch the skin on your upper arm or around your waist to see how “fat” you are?
4. Try on special clothes to see if they still fit you, or how tight they are?
5. Scrutinize other people to see how your body size compares with theirs?
6. Repeatedly ask your spouse or a trusted friend about whether you look fat or have good muscle tone?
7. Frequently compare yourself to models in fashion magazines, celebrities on TV, or sports figures?

These are all examples of body checking. You are probably afraid that you will get fat or lose your shape if you do not keep checking your body, especially those parts you are most concerned about. You check to ensure that you maintain your desired weight and shape. But it has the opposite effect. It's like weighing yourself several times a day. Remember that such frequent weighing contributes no useful information about your actual weight, but only serves to keep you focused (and worried) about your weight. (It is a good idea to re-read the section on weighing in Step 1). Remind yourself that if you keep picking at a sore it never gets the chance to heal.



Your purpose in engaging in body checking is to obtain objective information about your weight and shape. But the information you get is far from objective. It is heavily colored by your subjective, emotional

state at the time. How you feel about your body shape at any given moment depends on a variety of influences, including negative moods, eating food you believe to be high in fat or calories, and seeing models with seemingly perfect bodies in fashion magazines or other media images.

It is common for individuals with an eating disorder to body check when they are emotionally upset or just “feeling fat.” However, frequently checking your shape while you are upset or emotional can make any perceived body imperfection seem even greater. This constant checking in turn increases your distress and your focus on your body, which encourages further monitoring, thereby establishing a vicious circle. You might start thinking about why you look fat or unattractive, and blame yourself for not taking care of your body. Once you start feeling bad about your body (“feeling fat”) you probably begin to focus on other things you don’t like about yourself. You begin to dwell on mistakes you have made, faults that you have.

Bottom line? You feel demoralized and depressed. Your self-esteem takes a heavy hit. And you may continue to diet in an unhealthy way in the hope of changing your shape and weight.

### How to deal with body checking

As with changing your eating patterns, you first need to become aware of any body checking. You need to identify what your checking behaviors are, when you do them, and how they affect you. The best way to do this, as with your eating, is to keep a daily diary. Complete the **Daily Body Monitoring Form** at the end of this section each day over the course of the next week. It is important to include both weekdays and weekends to get a complete picture of any body checking you might do. Recording body checking

**Reflection Exercise:**

Which body checking behaviors do you engage in? Do you notice the vicious circle of checking and distress and focusing on your body?

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will help you become more aware of these behaviors and will allow you to track how these may be related to your eating patterns.

Once you have uncovered your problematic body-checking behaviors you can begin to eliminate them. We recommend that you tackle one checking behavior at a time, starting with the least difficult. As you get used to changing one behavior without undue anxiety or discomfort move on to the next in order of difficulty.

It is quite possible that you will have misgivings about making this

change. You may worry that if you don't keep body checking you will "let yourself go" and your weight might go up without you knowing. Many individuals have the same concern about cutting back on the number of times that they weigh themselves, as discussed in Step 1. This concern is understandable. But by now you probably know that weighing yourself once a week is helpful—it does not mean that you will suddenly lose control and see your weight increase.

**Check It Out!** You need to find out for yourself what happens if you give up your body checking behaviors. Our experience shows that ceasing body checking reduces negative body image. Check it out. You may initially feel some uneasiness about not body checking. This will pass. You need to commit yourself to not body checking for a full four weeks to see what impact it has on how you feel about yourself

### Here is how to modify body checking behaviors.

**One strategy** is simply to stop a specific checking behavior. For example, decide that you will stop pinching your skin to see how fat you are, and then try to follow through on this commitment to yourself. Or you can stop seeking reassurance about your body, and stop asking your spouse or friend if you look fat.



**A second strategy** is to reduce the amount of time you spend on checking activities or the frequency with which you do them. For example, set a predetermined limit on how much time you devote to dressing in the morning, or limit the number of outfits you try on to no more than two.

**A third strategy** is to change how, and under what conditions, you check your appearance. Take the example of looking at yourself in the mirror. You can do this in ways that either help or hurt.

### **The following are unhelpful:**

1. You check yourself in the mirror whenever you “feel fat.”
2. You focus mainly or exclusively on those parts of your body you dislike (e.g., stomach, hips, or thighs).
3. You are very self-critical while looking in the mirror.
4. You wish that the body you see in the mirror were different, and you image how it could be improved. This is what psychiatrist David Veale has called “mental cosmetic surgery.”

### **Here is what you can do instead:**

1. Use your mirror only for a predetermined purpose and time, e.g., to see if you are “presentable” versus seeing if you look fat.
2. Do NOT use the mirror in response to a “feeling fat” urge.
3. When you look in the mirror focus on your WHOLE BODY, and not just the parts you are most unhappy with.
4. Consciously try to reduce or stop self-critical judgments about your appearance.

Another problem behavior is the act of comparing your body with others’. The trap here is that the comparison with other people or photos in fitness and fashion magazines is a trigger for finding fault with your own appearance. Chances are that you tend to focus selectively on good-looking men or women (e.g., models). Instead, you can try to look around you at a wide range of men and women (not just models or movie stars), and note their physical imperfections as well as their attractiveness.

### **How to deal with the experience of “feeling fat”**

As noted earlier, it is common to “feel fat” for reasons that have little if anything to do with your actual body weight (e.g., comparing yourself unfavorably with someone thinner than you or a model in fashion magazine). The feeling of fatness is a real feeling and usually very unpleasant, but you need to consider what is really going on.

**Analyze this!** Perhaps something like the following scenario has happened to you. You were feeling okay about your body and then something negative occurred. For example, you felt rejected by someone you like or were trying to impress. And then you began to feel bad about your body? You felt fat. Reflect on this scenario, or something like it that has happened to you. The key point is that your body image might have changed a lot within the matter of a few hours. But your actual body did not change. You cannot really get fat or change shape in a few hours! So analyze what was happening.

Focus on the particular situation. What happened that might have made you feel bad about yourself and your body? What exactly are you feeling? Rejection? Disappointment? Anger? It will help to figure out your emotions and how they might be influencing your experience of your body. You can then take action to change the emotions. You need to address the situation that triggered the emotional reaction as opposed to dieting or body checking to change your body.

When you “feel fat,” instead of checking your body in the mirror, you can deal with the feeling in a different way. Remind yourself that “Now I am in the state where I feel fat. But that feeling is not necessarily a fact. Just because I **feel** fat does not mean I am fat. I am a normal weight person who sometimes feels fat.” (For objective information on whether you are overweight, refer to pages 205-206 in *Overcoming Binge Eating*.)



## Reviewing your progress

Review your self-monitoring records of any body checking behaviors. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Am I identifying specific body checking behaviors, what triggers them, and the impact they are having on me?
2. Have I been working systematically on stopping body-checking behaviors?
3. How many days was I successful in stopping (or limiting) at least one body checking behavior?
4. Have my urges to body-check decreased?

Table 1.

The following are the comments of a 24 year-old woman with a Body Mass Index of 22 (height – 5'4"; weight – 130 lbs). She was asked to consider the relative advantages and disadvantages of (1) trying to lose weight by dieting and constantly body-checking, and (2) accepting her current shape and weight.

	Pro	Con
Weight loss/ body-checking as a goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*I would be thinner which would make me more attractive.</li> <li>*I would be more popular and more desirable.</li> <li>*It would also mean that I would feel more in control of myself.</li> <li>*I would think of losing weight as a sign of my strength or will-power.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*I have learned from this program that dieting to lose weight will only maintain my eating disorder or even make it worse.</li> <li>*I'll end up obsessing about my shape and weight, and what I should eat or not eat, etc.</li> <li>*I know that defining success/failure in terms of weight loss undermines my self-esteem.</li> <li>*Also, my dieting has not even resulted in weight loss.</li> </ul>
Accepting my current weight as a goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*I have learned that it frees me from my eating disorder.</li> <li>*No more daily obsessing about shape/weight and eating.</li> <li>*I feel better even if my current weight is not perfect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*I'll be less vigilant—hence in danger of gaining more weight.</li> <li>*I could become fat and flabby.</li> </ul>

My conclusion when I review all of the evidence:

Although I sometimes still think there would be advantages to dieting and body checking, I can now clearly see that the disadvantages are much greater. Accepting my body as it is does not mean that I have given up. I can continue to eat and exercise in a healthy fashion as a way to improve my body.



## Body Avoidance

### Do you regularly do any of the following?

1. Wear loose fitting, baggy, or shapeless clothes (i.e., “fat clothes”) that conceal your body?
2. Avoid wearing shorts, sleeveless shirts, or short skirts?
3. Avoid looking at yourself in the mirror?
4. Avoid weighing yourself?
5. Avoid going to the pool or beach because you do not wish to be seen in a bathing suit?
6. Avoid going shopping for clothes?
7. Avoid sexual contact or letting your partner see you undressed?

As with body checking, avoidance only helps maintain your preoccupation with body shape and weight. Again, think about weighing yourself. Remember how not weighing yourself left you uncertain (and worried!) about your weight. Avoidance is self-defeating in the following ways:

1. By hiding your body, you are affirming that you have something to be ashamed of. The more you continue to avoid and hide, the more strongly you maintain your sense of shame and guilt.
2. Anticipation is often worse than reality. You will often find out that you do not look as bad as you thought you would in regular clothes (e.g., shorts or a bathing suit). It is a well-documented finding in psychology that anticipating the experience of a feared event usually causes more anxiety than the actual experience itself.
3. Dressing unattractively minimizes positive feedback about your appearance that you might otherwise receive.
4. Avoiding exposure to your body goes hand in hand with trying not to think about weight and shape. You try to suppress the thoughts. People often try this tactic but it fails them. Direct suppression of this type of upsetting thought is ineffective at best. At worst, it produces a “rebound effect” in which the thought returns with an even greater emotional impact.

### Reflection Exercise:

Which body avoidance behaviors do you engage in? Do you notice the vicious circle of avoidance and distress and focusing on your body?

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## How to Deal with Body Avoidance

As with checking behaviors you need to identify what your avoidance behaviors are, when you do them, and how they affect you. You need to keep a daily diary. Complete the **Daily Body Avoidance Form** each day over the course of the next week. Recording body avoidance behavior in your self-monitoring records will help you become more aware of these behaviors and will allow you to track how these may be related to your eating patterns.

As with body checking behaviors, we recommend that you tackle one behavior at a time, starting with the least difficult. As you get used to changing one behavior without undue anxiety or discomfort move on to the next in order of difficulty. It may be helpful to review the guidance on over-coming avoidance of feared or “forbidden” foods in Step 5 that is based on the same principle of not avoiding what you fear.

**Just Do It!** The golden rule for overcoming avoidance behaviors is to put your expectations and anticipatory fears to the test. For example, you may be avoiding wearing any form-fitting clothes because they would reveal too much of your body. You may feel self-conscious or even be ashamed of showing certain parts of your body. You may be anticipating negative comments from others. It may be hard, and it takes courage, but you need to do what you have been avoiding. Think of it as an experiment. Buy and then wear a tailored outfit or some article of clothing that reveals areas of your body that you have customarily kept hidden. At the end of the day, see how you feel. Do you feel better or worse than if you had worn your “fat clothes”? Did anyone comment on your appearance? Was this negative or positive? The more you stop avoiding and “just do it,” the easier it will become. But remember that to fully overcome well-established patterns of avoidance might take sustained practice.

## Acceptance and Change

The focus on behavior change must be balanced with accepting who you are. A common belief in our society is that body shape and weight are controllable, and can be changed if you only work hard enough at the task (e.g., engage in strict dieting and excessive exercise). But the reality is that we have less ability to change our body shape and weight than we might wish. Both are strongly influenced by genetic predisposition that places limits on the changes that can be made.

Once you have developed a healthy pattern of moderate and regular eating and exercise, you need to accept whatever body shape and weight these changes produce. You may not achieve your ideal body shape and weight. But repeatedly trying to alter what you cannot change is inevitably self-defeating: (1) it will cause frustration and disappointment; and (2) it could lead to dysfunctional dieting, unhealthy eating habits, binge eating, and extreme attempts to lose weight (e.g., purging).

You would like to achieve your ideal body shape and weight. **But it is not essential.** You can learn that happiness and a good life are not dependent on a particular body shape or weight. Focus on your positive qualities as a person. What do you like about yourself? What do other people like about you? What are you good at? It might be helpful to think of people you know who may have less than perfect bodies by today’s standards, but who nonetheless are happy and feel okay about themselves. This can help you appreciate that an ideal body shape and weight is **not essential** for a good life.



You have two main goals. First, make changes in your behavior that are good for your health and psychological well-being. Use the program described in this book to develop healthy eating habits, and to alter your negative body image behaviors. Second, be more accepting of yourself. Focus on developing your positive qualities. Authentic self-esteem comes from being a caring and competent person, rather than being based on your physical appearance.

Complete the following exercise about holding certain beliefs about body shape and weight. It will help summarize what has been said in this section. First, consider the belief that you **MUST** be thinner than you are and hence constantly worry about your weight. Now write out any **advantages** of holding this belief. Then list any **disadvantages**. (It will be helpful to read what you have written about the impact of body checking or body avoidance to complete this exercise). Second, write down any **advantages**, and then any **disadvantages**, of accepting your current body shape and weight. This self-acceptance assumes that you are trying to follow a healthy eating pattern and moderate level of physical exercise. What conclusion do you draw from this exercise? Table 1 provides an example of how this exercise was completed by a young woman with an eating disorder.

	Pro	Con
Weight loss/ body-checking as a goal:		
Accepting my current weight as a goal:		

Table 1.

The following are the comments of a 24 year-old woman with a Body Mass Index of 22 ( height - 5'4"; weight - 130 lbs). She was asked to consider the relative advantages and disadvantages of (1) trying to lose weight by dieting and constantly body-checking, and (2) accepting her current shape and weight.

	Pro	Con
Weight loss/ body-checking as a goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*I would be thinner which would make me more attractive.</li> <li>*I would be more popular and more desirable.</li> <li>*It would also mean that I would feel more in control of myself.</li> <li>*I would think of losing weight as a sign of my strength or will-power.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*I have learned from this program that dieting to lose weight will only maintain my eating disorder or even make it worse.</li> <li>*I'll end up obsessing about my shape and weight, and what I should eat or not eat, etc.</li> <li>*I know that defining success/failure in terms of weight loss undermines my self-esteem.</li> <li>*Also, my dieting has not even resulted in weight loss.</li> </ul>
Accepting my current weight as a goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*I have learned that it frees me from my eating disorder.</li> <li>*No more daily obsessing about shape/weight and eating.</li> <li>*I feel better even if my current weight is not perfect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*I'll be less vigilant—hence in danger of gaining more weight.</li> <li>*I could become fat and flabby.</li> </ul>

My conclusion when I review all of the evidence:

Although I sometimes still think there would be advantages to dieting and body checking, I can now clearly see that the disadvantages are much greater. Accepting my body as it is does not mean that I have given up. I can continue to eat and exercise in a healthy fashion as a way to improve my body.







## **Appendix C: Vignettes for the Guided Self-Help (GSH) Program**

### **Vignette #1:**

Catherine and her husband have four young children whom Catherine provides care for as a full-time mom. As the family meal planner and “chef”, she recently began adopting healthier eating habits for her and her family in an effort to regulate her own eating patterns. Catherine found herself snacking throughout the day and often eating her children’s left-over’s after eating her own meals. Now, Catherine makes sure she and her children have three healthy meals and 1-2 snacks a day. After two weeks, Catherine has noticed her clothes are fitting better and has more energy for her kids. Unfortunately, Catherine’s husband Joe continues to bring home unhealthy foods late at night after work. He knows his wife’s favorite dessert is ice cream and brings it to her nearly every day. Although Catherine has asked him to only bring home “healthy” snacks, Joe tells her “there’s nothing wrong with a little dessert and a ‘healthy’ looking wife with a little bit of meat on her bones!” Catherine feels compelled to eat the desserts he brings home as she notices his irritation and annoyance when she refuses to eat these “special treats.”

**Question: If you were Catherine, how would you handle the situation? Specifically, how would you balance your husband’s expectations and yours?**

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### **Vignette #2:**

Juliet, a 23-year old college student who still lives with her parents, has just started a new eating program after reading a book on eating disorders. Part of the program requires her to log her food intake throughout the day. Juliet has a food journal she keeps hidden in a drawer in her bedroom. She hides her food journal from her two sisters and parents as she feels embarrassed about her eating habits and is secretly trying to stop her binge eating. After three weeks of successfully logging her meals, Juliet is surprised to find her journal missing and not in her drawer! While searching for her food journal, Juliet feels her cheeks flush with embarrassment and begins to perspire. As she leaves her bedroom, she finds her sisters sharing her food journal with her private feelings about her eating habits with their mother! Her younger sisters are hysterically laughing while quoting her most private statements about her binge-purge cycles! Her mother is shocked and bewildered. She is confused and doesn’t understand what is happening to her oldest daughter and proclaims “What is wrong with how we eat?! We are lucky to have the meals we have! What have I done to you that is so bad?! Is this my fault? Get your father in here! He needs to know about this too!” Juliet is humiliated and speechless.

**Question: If you were Juliet, how would you handle the situation? Specifically, what would you say to your mother and other family members? What would you do about your future food logging?**

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**Vignette #3:**

Marina, a 32-year old, unmarried, career woman, has lived on her own since graduating from college at twenty-five. Although she lives alone, her immediate family is her primary social group. She is expected to visit often and participate in family events and celebrations. Although she loves her family, visiting them causes her to feel very anxious and overwhelmed. During these visits, her parents and grandparents serve her rich, fatty foods she can't imagine eating at all! Her family pressures her to eat more than what she can digest. They often tell her, "You need to gain weight if you want to get married!" Marina tries to get her family to understand that the portions they serve are over abundant and more than what is an appropriate amount. Her visits usually end in a conflict between her and her family because of her refusal to eat the foods they serve. She typically leaves upset and finds it more and more difficult to return to future family events and celebrations.

**Question: If you were Marina, how would you handle the situation?**

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**Vignette #4:**

Nicole is a 21-year old college student who works part time in retail while also attending school full time. Nicole has difficulty planning meals and snacks because her class and work schedules are different every day of the week; some days she has class during lunch and other days she has night classes or works late. She also works some weekends and sleeps late if she doesn't have to work, further causing fluctuations to her schedule. In addition to her work schedule, her activities outside of school also vary and make it challenging to stick to a schedule. Not only does her schedule vary from week to week, but she just got home from a spring break trip to Florida and has struggled to get "back into the swing of things" with her food choices and meal planning. **Question: If you were Nicole, how would you handle the situation she experiences or something similar on a daily basis? How would you handle transitioning back into a routine or regular pattern after a break or vacation?**

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**Vignette #5:**

Sasha is a 19-year old college student who lives in an off-campus apartment with 3 roommates. Sasha and her roommates agreed to cook some meals each week and do the majority of their grocery shopping together. Now, Sasha is trying to make healthier food choices and better plan out what and when she is eating, but her roommates don't seem to understand why she's being so "picky" when they want to order pizza or "boring" when she chooses to eat vegetables with her dinner instead of French fries. Sasha isn't sure how her roommates might react to learning about the study she is participating in and what she is learning about meal planning and living a healthy lifestyle. **Question: If you were Sasha, how would you handle the situation? Specifically, how might you talk to your roommates about the changes you want to make in your eating habits and for your health?**

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