

Homework

Tracking

<input type="checkbox"/> Food & activity records online (myfitnesspal)	<input type="checkbox"/> Meditation practice _____ days this week
<input type="checkbox"/> Food, activity & mood journal (paper)	<input type="checkbox"/> Journal 3 pages _____ mornings this week
<input type="checkbox"/> Specific food or eating behavior goal: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Specific action related to support system: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Specific activity /fun goal: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation practice _____ days this week
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Notes

MINDFULNESS

Principles of Mindfulness:

- Deliberately paying attention, non-judgmentally
 - Includes both internal processes and external environments
 - Being aware of what is present for you mentally, emotionally and physically
- With practice, mindfulness creates the possibility of freeing yourself of reactive, habitual patterns of thinking, feeling and acting

Mindful Eating is:

- Allowing yourself to become aware of the positive opportunities that are available through preparing and eating food
 - Choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body
 - Acknowledging responses to food (likes, neutral or dislikes) without judgment
- Learning to be aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop eating

Someone Who Eats Mindfully:

- Acknowledges that there is no right or wrong way to eat but varying degrees of awareness surrounding the experience of food
 - Accepts that his/her eating experiences are unique
- Is an individual who by choice, directs his/her awareness to all aspects of food and eating on a moment-by-moment basis
 - Is aware of and reflects on the effects caused by unmindful eating
- Experiences insight about how to achieve specific health goals as he/she becomes more attuned to the direct experience of eating and feelings of health

*Adapted from principles for mindful eating from The Center for Mindful Eating, found at <http://www.tcme.org/principles.htm>

Mindfulness for Weight Management

Work to normalize your eating rather than to “lose weight”

- Abandon the diet mentality forever – no more deprivation
- View food as fuel for your body, not as an emotional comfort
- Enjoy nutritious eating

Place importance on quality nutrition not dieting

- Focus on the benefits of various foods rather than categorizing food as “good” and “bad”
- Notice how you feel after eating various foods, with special attention on energy level, alertness, how long you stay satisfied and later cravings.
- Make nutritious choices because you want to not because you feel you should

Get rid of binges, cravings and guilt

- Abandon the idea of forbidden foods, give yourself permission to eat all foods
- Make sure you have enough protein and fiber at meals or you may find you are setting yourself up for cravings/overeating
- Keep yourself from getting too hungry, this gets in the way of healthy choices

Move your body on a regular basis

- Move your body in fun ways, doing things you enjoy
- Move for reasons other than weight loss, such as improving your mood, sleep or energy

Respect and appreciate your body – no matter what your size

- Feeling better about your body leads to healthier choices
- Start by noticing what your body has allowed you to do thus far in life

Be patient with your ability to change

- Learn to recognize and celebrate small successes
- Be gentle and patient with yourself – recognize that this process takes time and hard work and set backs will happen
- Measure your successes by things like improved energy and mood, less emotional eating or overeating, more regular physical activity, not weight loss

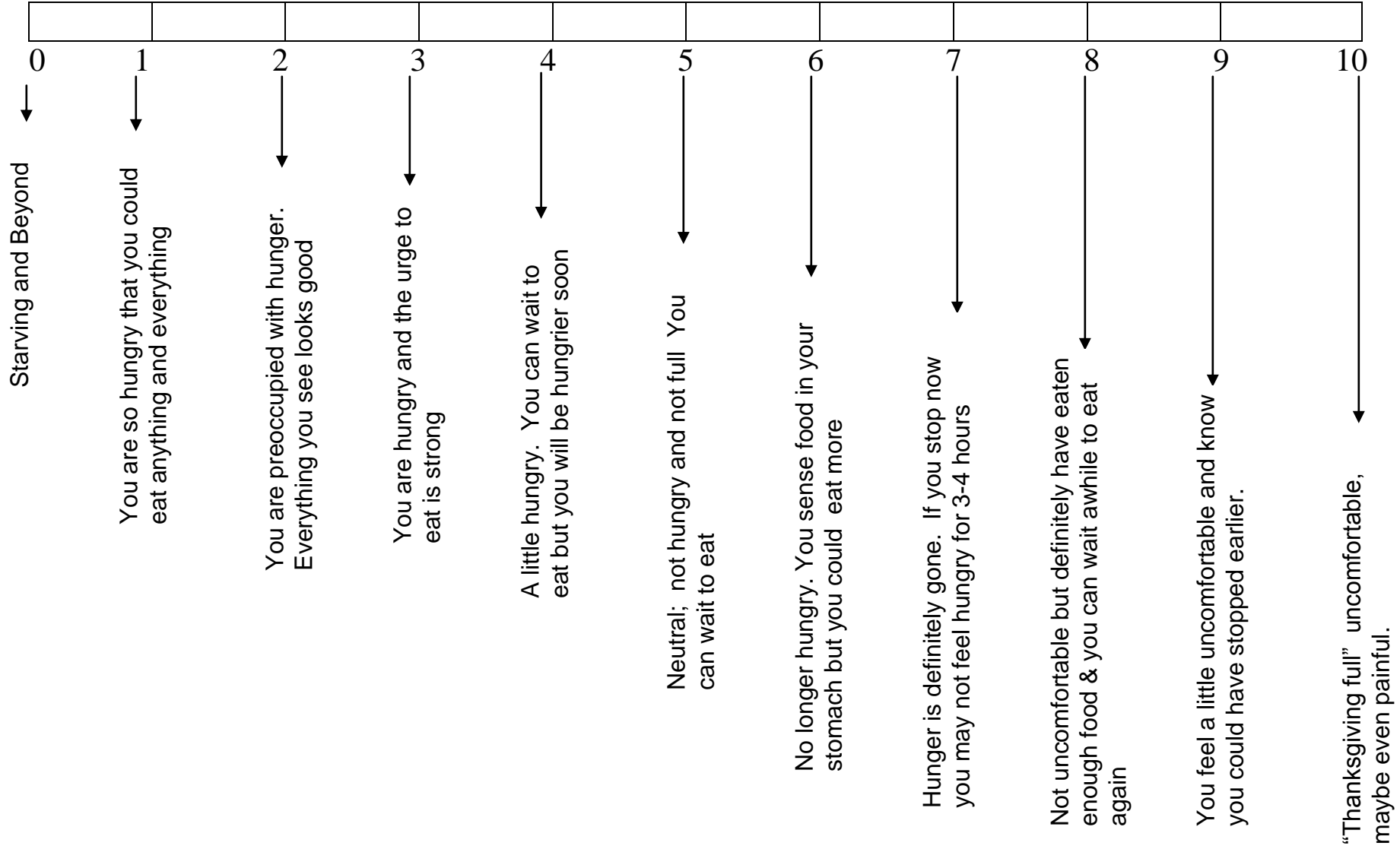
Check in with your mind and body

Practices for becoming a mindful eater

**Before deciding what or whether to eat, ask yourself:

1. Am I hungry?
Use the hunger scale to identify level of hunger
2. How does my current level of hunger influence my eating choices?
3. How did this food make me feel the last time I ate it?
4. Would I want to eat this food if it were not in front of me?
5. What is my mood? Am I trying to make myself feel better with food? Could I do something else to make myself feel better?
6. Am I just bored or does my body need food right now?
7. Does eating this fit with my goals for my body?

HUNGER / FULLNESS SCALE



This is a guideline to introduce you to the idea of gauging your hunger and fullness. Use the descriptions as a basis to develop your own descriptions of hunger and fullness. Tools such as this help you become more aware of why you are eating as well as giving you a mental practice to help you develop healthy eating habits. Use this tool by rating yourself on the scale before and after each meal.

How can mindfulness meditation for stress help?

Simply put mindfulness soothes our nervous system. While stress activates the “fight or flight” part of our nervous system, mindfulness meditation activates the “rest and digest” part of our nervous system, helping with stress management. Our heart rate slows, our respiration slows and our blood pressure drops. This is often called the “relaxation response”. While chronic activation of the response can be extremely damaging to the body, the relaxation response is restorative, making meditation for stress and improving wellbeing significant.

People who practice mindfulness regularly report feeling less stressed and more emotionally balanced - and now neuroscientists are starting to understand why this type of stress management works. Using fancy brain imaging techniques, neuroscientists observed changes in the threat system of the brain. The response kicks-off in the amygdala, the part of the brain responsible for triggering fear, and people who suffer from chronic anxiety have a more reactive amygdala. This leaves them feeling threatened much of the time.

A study performed at Stanford found that an 8-week mindfulness course reduced the reactivity of the amygdala and increased activity in areas of the prefrontal cortex that help regulate emotions, subsequently reducing stress. Researchers from Harvard discovered corresponding changes in the physical structure of the brain with a similar meditation course; there was a lower density of neurons in the amygdala and greater density of neurons in areas involved in emotional control providing a realistic and maintainable stress management technique.

References

1. The Mental Health Foundation. (2010). The Mindfulness Report. London: The Mental Health Foundation.
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3. Goldin, P. R., & Gross, J. J. (2010). Effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) on emotion regulation in social anxiety disorder. *Emotion*, 10(1), 83-91.
4. Hölzel, B. K., J. Carmody, M. Vangel, C. Congleton, S. M. Yerramsetti, T. Gard & S. W. Lazar (2011) Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Neuroimaging Vol 191*, pg36-43.

How meditation can help as a treatment for addiction

Although it's a seemingly simple technique, mindfulness operates on a number of levels,

- makes us more able to notice cravings before they take a hold of us
- strengthens our muscles of attention making it easier for us to let go of sticky thoughts of chocolate cake, cigarettes, or cognac if we need to.
- makes us more able to experience cravings without having to react to them
- makes us more able to cope with stress, which makes us less likely to turn to pleasure as a crutch in the first place

Researchers from Yale recently found that a 4-week mindfulness training program was more effective as a *treatment for addiction* for smoking than the American Lung Association's 'gold standard' treatment. Over a period of 4 weeks, on average, people saw a 90% reduction in the number of cigarettes they smoked-from 18/day to 2/day and 35% of smokers quit completely! In a four-month follow-up over 30% maintained their abstinence. ¹

Neuroscientists found that after just five 20 minute sessions of a mindfulness meditation technique, people had increased blood flow to an area of the brain vital to self-control, the anterior cingulate cortex. After 11 hours of practice, they found actual physical changes in the brain around this area.

Although rigorous research on meditation as a treatment for addiction is still in its infancy, the results show great promise for binge eating disorder, cigarette addiction and alcohol relapse prevention. It has even reduced marijuana and crack consumption in trained prison inmates! ^{3,4,5}

So if you ever find yourself indulging a little more than you'd like, give mindfulness a whirl...

References

1. Mindfulness Training for smoking cessation: results from a randomized controlled trial. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 119(1-2):72-80
2. Short-term meditation induces white matter changes in the anterior cingulate. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(35), 15649-15652
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4. Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention for Alcohol and Substance Use Disorders. 19(3), 211-228
5. Mindfulness meditation and substance use in an incarcerated population. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 20(3), 343-347