It’s Not Just What You Eat, But Why

By Michelle May, M.D.

Many people have the mistaken belief that their problems with food are caused by what and how much they eat. Those are important but they only tell part of the story. In fact, what you eat and how much you eat are strongly affected by why you’re eating in the first place.

The Am I Hungry?® Mindful Eating Cycle will help you see how each decision you make can affect your other choices.

The first step to changing the way you eat is awareness. As you become more mindful of each decision point in your Mindful Eating Cycle, you’ll discover small changes that can make a big difference in why, when, what, how, and how much you eat and where you invest your energy.

Why? Why do I eat?
- Why do I think I eat?
- Am I aware of any situations or emotions that trigger me to want to eat when I’m not hungry? Examples: Mealtimes, social events, certain

Where? Where do I invest my energy?
- Order less food; ask for a to-go container; get up from the table; turn off the TV; say “no” to food pushers

When? When do I want to eat?
- When do I eat in a typical day? Would a food diary for a few days help?
- Do I restrict myself from eating certain foods—then later give-in and overeat those foods?
- What health issues do I need to be aware of when deciding what to eat? Examples: High blood pressure, high cholesterol, family history of diabetes.
- What kind of beverages do I drink?
- What types of food do I feel like eating when I’m eating for emotional reasons? Why?
- Are there any areas of my diet that I could improve right now?
- What specific change would I like to make at this time?
- What kind of foods could I keep on hand to eat when I’m hungry?

How? How do I eat?
- Do I eat while I’m distracted? Examples: Watching T.V.; reading; driving; working; talking…
- Do I eat fast?
- Do I really taste my food?

What? What do I eat?
- What health issues could I keep on hand to eat when I’m hungry?
- What types of foods do I feel like eating when I’m eating for emotional reasons? Why?
- Are there any areas of my diet that I could improve right now?
- What specific change would I like to make at this time?
- What kind of foods could I keep on hand to eat when I’m hungry?

How Much? How much do I eat?
- Do I eat differently in private than I do in public?
- Do I usually clean my plate?
- If I’m not hungry when I start eating, how do I know when to stop?
- What situations or emotions trigger me to overeat?
- What could I do to address those triggers more effectively? Examples: Order less food; ask for a to-go container; get up from the table; turn off the TV; say “no” to food pushers

What health issues could I keep on hand to eat when I’m hungry?
- What types of foods do I feel like eating when I’m eating for emotional reasons? Why?
- Are there any areas of my diet that I could improve right now?
- What specific change would I like to make at this time?
- What kind of foods could I keep on hand to eat when I’m hungry?

Michelle May, M.D. is a recovered yo-yo dieter and the award-winning author of Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat: How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle.

Download chapter one at http://amihungry.com/chapter1.