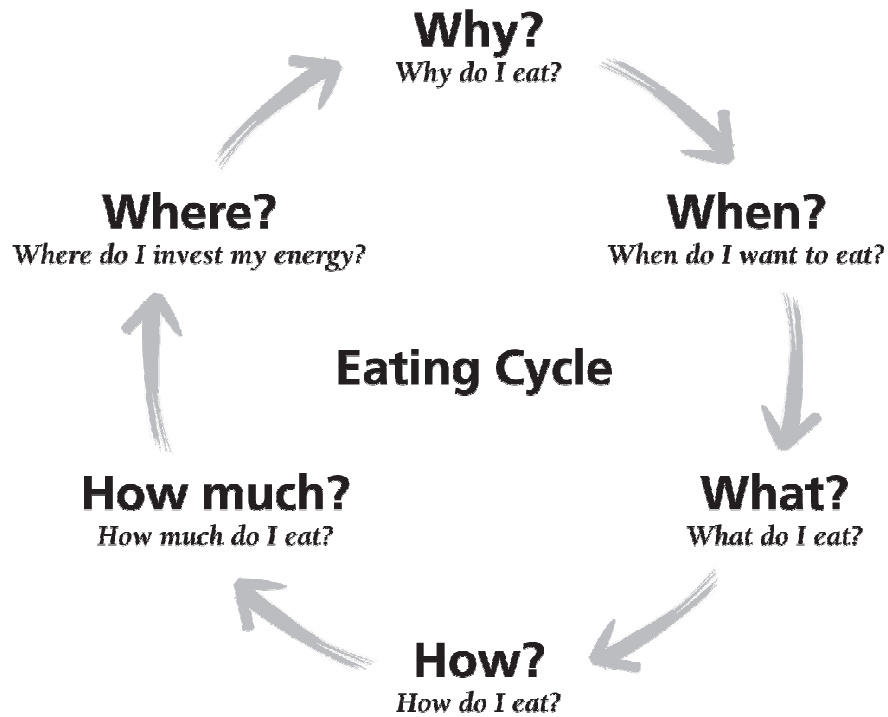




**Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat
How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle**

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From *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat: How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle* by Michelle May, M.D.

Using the Am I Hungry?® Eating Cycle

Eating is a series of conscious and unconscious decisions that can be explored using the Am I Hungry?® Eating Cycle. Individuals who struggle with overeating and/or yoyo dieting will move gradually toward instinctive eating as they gradually gain insight into their eating decisions.

Often, when we really listen to a patient or client describe their struggle (or explore our own), we're able to identify one or more decision points that are involved. Rather than *telling* them what to do, ask a few more questions, share insights where appropriate, and guide them to discover the answers for themselves.

The following table suggests questions and key messages for each decision point. Focus on just one or two at a time or you'll both feel overwhelmed. Remember, this not a formula; it is a process.

Decision	Questions for increasing awareness	Key messages and possible strategies
Why? Why do I eat?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think you eat? • Are you aware of any situations or emotions that trigger you to want to eat when you aren't hungry? (Examples: mealtimes, ballgames, certain people, stress, boredom, buffets, getting ready to start a diet.) • Have you tried a lot of diets? What happened? How did they work for you long term? Why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instinctive Eating Cycle: The need for fuel is the primary reason for eating; hunger is a primitive yet reliable way to regulate fuel intake. • Overeating Cycle: Environmental and emotional cues can trigger an urge to eat (or continue eating) whether there is a physical need for fuel or not. • Restrictive Eating Cycle: Diets and rules can lead to preoccupation with food and feelings of deprivation that eventually lead to rebound overeating.
When? When do I feel like eating?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do you feel like eating? • How can you tell if you're hungry? • What are some ways that you could redirect your attention away from food and eating until you get hungry? • What could you do to cope more effectively with your emotional triggers for eating? (Examples: manage stress better, find a hobby, treat yourself to a hot bath, ask for help around the house.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask yourself, "Am I hungry?" whenever you feel like eating. (Help them develop an internalized mechanism of knowing why they want to eat.) • Hunger is a <i>physical</i> feeling; it is not the same thing as cravings, appetite, or a desire to eat. • Getting <i>too</i> hungry can be a trigger for overeating. • Identify and reduce environmental cues for overeating, for example putting food out of sight, avoiding areas like the break room where food is likely to be found and ordering half-portion or sharing meals. • Identify and cope with emotional triggers for overeating such as boredom, stress, sadness, anger, loneliness, celebrating, or rewarding yourself. (Refer as needed).
What? What do I eat?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you eat in a typical day? • What kinds of beverages do you drink? • What types of food do you want to eat when you're eating for emotional reasons? • Do you restrict yourself from eating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Foods Fit: there are no "good" foods or "bad" foods. • Use balance, variety, and moderation to guide your choices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Balance - provide your body with the necessary nutrients. Balance eating for nourishment with eating for enjoyment.

	<p>certain foods then later give-in and overeat those foods?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you aware of how certain foods (or certain amounts of those foods) affect you? • What health issues do you need to consider when choosing food (i.e. h/o HTN, high cholesterol, family h/o diabetes, etc.) • Are there any areas of your diet that you think could be improved? • What specific change would you like to make at this time? • What kind of food could you keep on hand to eat when you are hungry? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Variety - eat a variety of foods from the different food groups and a variety of foods within each group. ○ Moderation – consider overall dietary intake, not just the portion size of one particular item, or a particular meal. • Ask yourself three questions when deciding what to eat: What do I want? What do I need? What do I have? • If <i>you</i> choose to make a change in your diet, take small, focused, incremental steps (Examples: increasing fruits and vegetables, improving the quality of the fluids you drink, lowering saturated and trans fat intake and shifting to healthier fats – their choice!)
<p>How? How do I eat?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you eat while distracted? (Examples: watching T.V., driving, working.) • Do you think you eat fast? • Do you eat differently in private than you do in public? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat mindfully; stay aware of your body, the food, and the ambience. • Minimize distractions (Examples: take time to eat, turn off the TV, eat while seated at a table.) • Savor each bite, one at a time, noticing the appearance, aromas, and flavors. • Set your fork down between bites.
<p>How Much? How much do I eat?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you typically feel after eating? • How does it feel when you've eaten too much food? • What situations or emotions trigger overeating for you? • What could you do to address those triggers more effectively (Examples: order less food, get up from the table, turn off the T.V., etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your stomach is about the size of your fist so it takes about a handful or two of food to fill it. • When you eat more than your body needs, you may feel uncomfortable and sluggish. • Eating the right amount of food is not about being good but about feeling good. (Develop an internalized mechanism of choosing portions.) • Big difference between guilt and regret. • Practice ending your meal when you are satisfied instead of stuffed.
<p>Where? Where do I invest my energy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you spend (or invest) the fuel you consume? • Are you physically active? • Do you limit your “screen time?” • Do you exercise? What do you like to do? • What else do you do? For example, do you like to play with your children, do you have hobbies, do you volunteer, do you like to travel? • Is there anything else you would like to do that you are not doing now? What are your goals for your relationships, your career, your life? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The food you consume provides the energy and nutrients to live, work, play, and exercise. • When you eat more than you need, the excess fuel will be stored to be used for fuel later. • Increased physical activity in daily living can have a significant impact on your fuel balance. • Exercise will improve your health, increase your stamina and function, and make you feel better. • When you invest your energy in living a full, balanced life, you are less likely to use food to meet your needs, therefore breaking an Overeating and Restrictive Eating Cycle.