

Am I Hungry? E-Newsletter May 2008

For a formatted version of this newsletter: <http://www.amihungry.com/pdf/newsletter-05-08.pdf>.

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WHAT YOU RESIST, PERSISTS

By Michelle May, M.D.

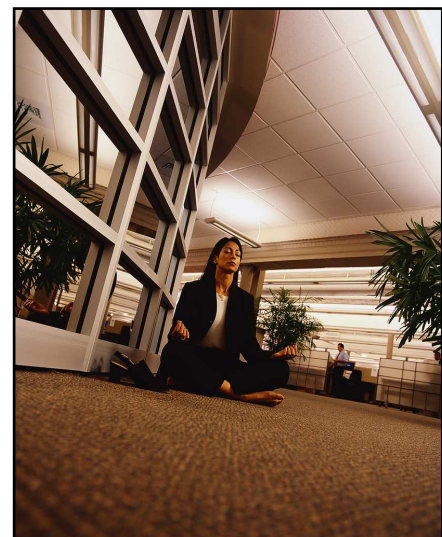
Even healthy doctors end up on the other side of the stethoscope sometimes. No worries; I'm fine now but the experience was a wonderful reminder of how valuable it is to be able to "sit" with discomfort rather than trying to push it away.

What does that have to do with "Am I Hungry?" you ask? Everything as it turns out.

Recognizing that I needed to have surgery, I found myself dreading the pre-op clear liquid diet. A person who names her company "Am I Hungry?" wouldn't intentionally ignore her hunger signals, would she? As I stocked up on tea, Jell-O, and bullion, I realized that I actually felt anxious about going 36 hours without food. The anxiety reminded me of times in the past when I automatically reached for food to make other uncomfortable feelings go away, like boredom or feeling overwhelmed.

When I made the connection between how I felt just anticipating the discomfort of hunger (which I knew I would survive) and the discomfort of stress and other triggers (which I also knew I could survive), I realized that I had been given a gift. I had an opportunity to mindfully experience something I wouldn't have voluntarily chosen but had no choice but to endure. The moment I stopped resisting the idea and began to embrace it instead, my whole perspective shifted.

I became alive and in tune with my body and everything that was going on around me. I had previously considered canceling my morning hike because of the fast ahead, but now I relished every step, knowing it would be several weeks before I could climb my favorite trail again. Afterward I treated myself to one final yoga class and settled easily and deeply into "corpse pose" at the end of my practice despite the audible grumbling of my stomach.



As the day progressed, I mentally reviewed the details of each level of hunger on the Hunger and Fullness Scale as I passed through it:

The Hunger and Fullness Scale										
Ravenous	Starving	Hungry	Pangs	Satisfied	Full	Very Full	Discomfort	Stuffed	Sick	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

5 – No hunger or fullness

4 – Just hunger pangs; it's my first awareness that I'll need more fuel soon

3 – I'm definitely hungry now; my stomach is growling

2 – A growing emptiness in the pit of my stomach. My blood sugar must be dipping as I'm increasingly distracted by thoughts of food

1 – Ah yes, I am famished. Headache – check. Difficulty concentrating – check. Irritability – check. Why does every commercial seem to be about food? And why is my husband eating in front of me?

At one point, I actually laughed out loud, "Hey, this is just like I described in my book!" Since eating anything more than a cup of broth was not an option, I remained calm and introspective. Other than feeling less energetic than usual, nothing bad happened. The hunger would subside then come back stronger awhile later to remind me that I was still ignoring it.

All too often, we resist any sort of physical or emotional discomfort. As soon as we notice loneliness, anger, fear, stress, pain or other unavoidable suffering that comes with being human, we turn on the tube, shovel food in our mouths, have a glass of wine – or sometimes all three simultaneously. It's as though we believe we can tune it out, shove it down, or drown it. Sooner or later, it comes bubbling back up to the surface, so we reach for our next quick fix.

What's your fix? Shopping? Work? Sex? Chocolate? Exercise? Dieting? Perfection? It doesn't matter; none of them work for long because what you resist, persists; and the longer, the stronger.

In our "Gotta feel good all the time" culture, we've been taught that buying more, eating more, or achieving more will keep us happy all the time. This is the greatest lie ever told and perhaps it is keeping you trapped in an endless quest to avoid feeling anything at all.

To be clear, your emotional and physical feelings (both wonderful and painful) are your body's way of communicating your needs with you. Rather than pushing them away with food or some other quick fix, practice observing them, accepting them, even embracing them. Here are some ways you can sit with your feelings when you're ready to try it:

- Become aware of your breathing.
- Sit with your feelings and watch how they naturally ebb and flow.
- Write your feelings down, unedited, using a journal, computer or even a scrap of paper.
- Complete the sentence: I feel... or I am... For example, "I feel lonely," or "I am angry with my boss" or "I am worried about my children."
- Imagine there is a pressure valve on your body that you can turn to release some of your emotions. You can turn the valve higher or lower to control the flow of emotions.

- Describe your feelings as a picture or a metaphor. Start with, “My feelings are like…” and compare them to a color, an animal, a familiar story, or whatever images surface.
- Draw images or scribble on a pad of paper to see what emerges.
- Talk about your thoughts and feelings out loud or into a tape recorder.
- Discuss your feelings with a trusted friend or family member.
- Seek the assistance of a counselor or therapist if you feel overwhelmed, scared or unable to identify or work through your emotions.

When I woke up in pain after surgery, my first impulse was to tense up and somehow try to make it go away. From somewhere, the lessons I learned during my fast emerged. I took a few deep breaths, asked for a back rub, and was soon back asleep. Sixty hours passed before I ate again (who knew hospital eggs could taste so good). Now, slowly, things are getting back to normal—eating according to my body’s signals and looking forward to crab legs for my anniversary tonight.

I am grateful for the experience and to be honest, glad it was only temporary. I absolutely don’t advocate fasting for weight loss and I’m not convinced that it’s necessary for cleansing despite all the crazy claims out there. However, that feeling of peace in the face of discomfort helped me finally understand why people fast for spiritual reasons.

It also left me more convinced than ever that asking yourself, “Am I hungry?” when you feel like eating is a wonderful first step for tuning into your true needs. But next time, instead of rushing in to make yourself feel better, simply remain present to the experience and the lessons you might discover in that moment.

Eat Mindfully. Live Vibrantly!
Michelle May, M.D.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 18 NEW AM I HUNGRY?® FACILITATORS!

Welcome Elizabeth Blackgoat, Marilyn Burwitz, Clarissa Calingasan, Sabrina DiGioia, Sarah Enders, Stephanie Greiner, Linda Hammond, John Hernandez, Rebecca Johnson, Vera Knight, Diane Lambert, Mindy Masters, Mandy Muenzer, Lisa Nielson, Rosina Pellerano, Gail Reilly, Miggy Scott, and Tracy Story.

Workshops starting soon: Workshops starting soon: Glendale, Arizona; Winslow, Arizona; Seminole, Florida; Farmington, New Mexico; Tucson, Arizona; Redondo Beach, California; Annapolis, Maryland; Highland Park, New Jersey; Springfield, Illinois; and Kent, Washington; and Phoenix, Arizona.

Find a workshop near you at <http://www.amihungry.com/weight-management-workshops.shtml>.

SAVE YOUR SEAT! OUT NEXT AM I HUNGRY?® FACILITATOR TRAINING BEGINS AUGUST 19TH

“A+++++++ Michelle possesses a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the field of weight management. Her spirit and enthusiasm are contagious. Not only did I learn a lot about myself, I learned invaluable skills in facilitation. I was pleased to find that we have access to professional quality resources that are customizable. Offering Am I Hungry? classes will be a

breeze! I would highly recommend the Facilitator Training to anyone interested in helping others reach their highest potential.”
Liz Blackgoat, RN, LMT

Details and registration: <http://www.amihungry.com/facilitator-training.shtml>.

READER E-MAIL OF THE MONTH

Thank you so much! Your book has been such a tremendous help to me. It's as if I've been in a room surrounded by lights, but you flipped on the one overhead and now I can see clearly!
Audrey H. Lindsey
Senior Client Associate, Wachovia Securities

FEATURED PRODUCT:

NEW! AM I HUNGRY?® CHRISTIANS' COMPANION GUIDE (E-BOOK)

Dr. Michelle May interviews Monique Moore, Licensed Am I Hungry?® Facilitator and author of the new *Am I Hungry? Christians' Companion Guide*.

Dr. May: I wrote *Am I Hungry?* because I felt that dieting focused too much on what people eat and how much they exercise and not enough on our overall health and well-being—body, mind, heart, and spirit. Why did you want to develop a specific Christians' Companion Guide?

Monique: *Am I Hungry?* is wonderful for helping people replace overeating and restrictive eating with self-care. As I facilitated *Am I Hungry?*® Workshops, I noticed a natural connection to Biblical teachings such as peace, grace, gratitude, and abundant life. I put this Companion Guide together so Facilitators who want the opportunity to teach in a faith-based setting have a strong foundation to build on.

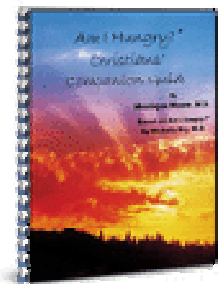
Dr. May: But it's not just for Facilitators is it?

Monique: No; I wrote it as a companion guide for individuals or groups who want to explore the truths God has to share with them as they learn this new way of caring for themselves. There are eight lessons to complement each chapter of *Am I Hungry?* My hope is that the scriptures, study questions, and prayers will deepen their understanding of the principles taught in *Am I Hungry?* since I personally know how life-changing they are.

Dr. May: Tell us about the lessons.

Monique: Each lesson begins with a summary of the corresponding *Am I Hungry?*® workshop and an overview of how the concepts tie into the theme of that lesson. This is followed by an opening prayer, several thought-provoking questions with space to journal as you explore your thoughts and feelings, and powerful scriptures to remind each of us how God can help through this process, and finally, a closing prayer. The lessons conclude with “Food for Thought” so you can delve even further if you choose. It's all designed to give those of Christian faith the opportunity to draw from their spiritual reservoir and use the foundation that Christ provides to strengthen them during their journey.

Dr. May: Thank you for putting your heart and soul into this project Monique. Those that are interested in further study can now download a copy of your e-book from our catalog <http://www.amihungry.com/book.shtml>.



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<http://www.amihungry.com/enews.shtml>.