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Am I Hungry? E-Newsletter
September 2005



Go to http://www.amihungry.com/pdf/newsletter_09_05.pdf for a formatted PDF version of this newsletter.

Head Hunger?

Do you sometimes confuse “head hunger” with “body hunger?”

If you are someone who is sensitive to food cues, weight management becomes much easier when you are able to recognize the triggers in your environment and break the associations that lead you to overeat simply out of habit. This month’s article, “Coping with Your Triggers for Overeating” reviews several common triggers and suggests strategies for coping more effectively. You can also print a one-page handout, “101 Things To Do Instead of Eating When You’re NOT Hungry.”

http://www.amihungry.com/pdf/101_things_to_do_besides_eat.pdf

I am thrilled to tell you that the American Academy of Family Physicians is launching the next phase of their Americans in Motion campaign and they have used Am I Hungry? concepts throughout the patient education toolkit. Order your free copy at <http://www.aafp.org/aim.xml>.

Last, we are excited to bring you the brand new companion “Am I Hungry? Awareness Journal” specifically designed to help you effectively apply what you read in “Am I Hungry? What to Do When Diets Don’t Work.” See more information and \$5 off below.

Wishing you optimal health and joy!
Michelle May, M.D.

COPING WITH YOUR TRIGGERS FOR OVEREATING

By Michelle May, M.D. and Lisa Galper, Psy.D.

Let’s take a look at just a few of the common triggers for overeating and strategies for coping more effectively.

BY THE CLOCK: Society programs us to follow a schedule, so like Pavlov’s dog, you may have learned to salivate when the bell rings. The reality is that it is more

convenient to eat at certain times than others so it takes effort to listen to your hunger cues.

Strategy: Though it is challenging to change this routine, you can adapt it to fit your own needs. Learn to pace yourself by observing your natural hunger rhythms. You will probably notice that you get hungry every 3-6 hours depending on what and how much you ate at your last meal. Keep a healthy snack handy to satisfy hunger that doesn't conform to mealtimes. If you are consistently tempted to snack right before a meal, consider moving the mealtime up. And remember, you don't need to eat a whole meal if your body is not hungry for it just because it is time.

HIGH RISK TIMES: Many people have times of the day that are high risk for overeating. For example, you may experience a late afternoon energy slump or a tendency to munch when you come home from work to transition into your evening.

Strategy: Know when you are most at risk and develop an alternate strategy. For example, create a Recharge Ritual or Transition Time that helps you relax or unwind. Save a favorite magazine or book to read, call a friend, or walk your dog instead.

'TIS THE SEASON: Be aware of your seasonal and weather related cues for eating. Holidays can be especially difficult because of all of the social ties to certain foods and even certain people. Many of the foods you eat during this time may seem "special" and therefore, harder to eat in sensible quantities.

Strategy: These occasions repeat themselves so you can anticipate what typically occurs and create a plan for dealing with your triggers. Make it a point to really listen to your body instead of the external cues when making your food choices. Also keep in mind that special foods will be even more special when you eat them mindfully when you are hungry, focusing on the appearance and flavors of the food, the ambiance, the other people, and the reason you are all together.

TEMPTING DISPLAYS: Seeing displays of food like candy or nuts in dishes and tempting foods when you open your cabinet or refrigerator can trigger you to want those foods.

Strategy: Out of sight, out of mind. Do not use food as decorations or leave appetizing foods laying in plain view. Try putting tempting foods behind other foods in your cabinets and refrigerator. If a co-worker keeps food out, ask them to put it in a drawer instead.

MEDIA: Food is everywhere in television and magazines (ironically often right next to the articles about the latest wonder diet!)

Strategy: Get yourself a glass of water during commercials, avoid watching programs that focus on food, and skip quickly over the food ads and recipes. Break the habit of eating while watching television—usually a mindless, high calorie activity.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: If you eat in front of T.V., in bed, or standing in the kitchen, you may have an urge to eat just from being in those places.

Strategy: Try to eat only while sitting at a table. Make it a family rule to limit the eating to one or two rooms in the house. This will decrease triggers like T.V. and reading and help you focus on enjoying your food without distractions.

BIGGIE SIZE: Restaurants often serve overly large portions to make their customers feel that they are getting value.

Strategy: Be prepared to have extra food wrapped up to go as soon as you feel satisfied or estimate how much you think you will need a wrap up the rest even before you start eating. If you leave the food sitting in front of you, you will be more likely to keep nibbling. Remind yourself that you will get to enjoy that food again when you are hungry. You can also share an entrée or order an appetizer-sized portion.

FORBIDDEN FOOD SYNDROME: Although it is a popular topic of conversation, the mere discussion of dieting can trigger feelings of deprivation and cravings. Just thinking about restrictive dieting has been shown to increase food intake.

Strategy: Decrease the amount of time you spend talking about food, weight, and dieting. Depend on your physical hunger cues to let you know when it is time to eat.

FOOD AND FEELINGS: Emotions are common triggers for eating. Food you eat to deal with feelings comes with strings attached—namely weight gain and regret. Most importantly, eating does not adequately meet your emotional needs so those unmet needs will trigger overeating again and again.

Boredom, anger, anxiety and other feelings are a natural part of our lives and eating won't make them go away. In fact, eating to cope with your emotions disconnects you from your intuition and interferes with your ability to discover and satisfy your true needs.

Strategy: The way to break out of this pattern is to stop judging yourself when you overeat and instead try to figure out what you needed that drove you to eat when you weren't physically hungry. Examining your current eating behavior can be a powerful source of information about your inner self and your true needs and wants. Once you have identified the emotions that triggered the urge to eat, you can find ways to comfort, nurture, calm, and distract yourself without turning to food.

By learning to recognize and decrease your overeating triggers, distracting yourself, and coping effectively with those triggers, you will break out of old habits. You will find yourself eating less, feeling more satisfied, and meeting your needs more appropriately. This will lead to long-term weight management without dieting.

(This article is a short excerpt from Teleseminar 205 – Coping with Your Triggers for Overeating, which is part of our series, I'm Not Hungry – What to Do When I Want to Eat Anyway. These are available as "easy-to-read over a cup of coffee" downloadable

E-Books and one hour CDs. Imagine how much you could learn by listening as you drive across town! Take a look at all the resources available to you in our updated online catalog at <http://www.amihungry.com/book.shtml>)

101 THINGS TO DO BESIDES EAT

Print the F-R-E-E one page handout, “101 Things to Do Instead of Eating When You’re NOT Hungry.” Just highlight the activities that appeal to you and add some of your own. Keep your list (and any necessary supplies) handy and make a commitment to try one before eating simply out of habit.

http://www.amihungry.com/pdf/101_things_to_do_besides_eat.pdf

This is just one of MANY tools available in our new “AM I HUNGRY? AWARENESS JOURNAL” E-Book – the companion to Am I Hungry? What to Do When Diets Don’t Work.”

This journal will maximize your weight loss results by guiding you to much greater awareness of your thoughts, feelings, and actions. Each chapter includes an overview, action plan, goals, tools and tables for quick reference, and key questions for applying Am I Hungry? to your own life. You'll also receive bonus Life Skills not found in Am I Hungry? and a 7-Day Journal for each chapter. Order your copy or take a look at more sample pages at <http://www.amihungry.com/book.shtml>

When you buy Am I Hungry? What to Do When Diets Don’t Work, you will receive \$5 off the companion Awareness Journal. If you already own Am I Hungry?, just send me an email (MMay@AmIHungry.com) before 9/30/05 telling me where you bought the book and I’ll send you a link to get \$5 off the journal.

RESOURCES FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Encourage your patients to get fit with the latest Americans in Motion (AIM) resources from the American Academy of Family Physicians. Order your F-R-E-E “AIM to Change” tool kit featuring practical advice and valuable resources for family physicians. AAFP- AIM pedometers are also available for purchase now. These handy tools help you and your patients get moving toward better health. To view these AIM resources and more, visit: <http://www.aafp.org/aim.xml> .

Sign up to receive this Am I Hungry? E-newsletter once a month or read all of the practical and content-packed back issues at <http://www.amihungry.com/enews.shtml>.

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