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Am I Hungry? E-Newsletter, October 2004

I am pleased to let you know that our book, *Am I Hungry? What To Do When Diets Don't Work* is now available at <http://amihungry.com/book.shtml> (additional information is available at the end of this E-News.) I believe that you will find the information fresh, motivating, and most importantly, practical. I hope you will take the time to review the contents and share this information with those you care about who may benefit. If you decide to purchase the book, please take a moment to drop me a note to let me know what you think. We are very interested in your feedback.

Wishing you optimal health and joy,

Michelle May, M.D.

Decision Point: Am I Hungry?

Human beings are born with the natural ability to regulate their dietary intake to meet their nutritional needs. Hunger is your body's way of telling you that you need fuel. When you become disconnected from hunger and satiety, you lose the ability to regulate your intake to meet your body's needs. When you reconnect with these signals, you can reach and maintain a healthy weight without restrictive dieting.

Perhaps you have ignored hunger for so long that you have forgotten how to recognize it. You may even blame it for your weight problem and see it as the enemy. At the same time, you may have learned to ignore the feeling of satisfaction so you eat until you are overly full and uncomfortable. You may have learned to "clean your plate," "never waste food," and "eat all your dinner if you want dessert," instead of stopping when you've had enough. And you will perpetuate the cycle by teaching your children the same things.

Ironically, hunger can help you lose weight. You will eat less food when you are eating to satisfy physical hunger than if you eat to satisfy other needs. Think about it. If you are not hungry when you start eating, how do you know when to stop? Besides, food just tastes better when you are truly hungry. In fact, the only way to be really satisfied with food is to eat because you are physically hungry. Hunger is truly the best seasoning!

So, the next time you have an urge to eat, ask yourself, "Am I hungry?" This important question will help you recognize the difference between an urge to eat caused by the physical need for food from an urge to eat caused by other triggers. By focusing on hunger as your guide, you can become your own internal authority for when, what, and how much to eat.

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Fitness Essentials: Making Time for Exercise

Although exercise is one of the most powerful tools available for improving health and managing weight, even the word "exercise" can conjure up negative thoughts and feelings. Many people have come to think of exercise as punishment for overeating rather than an opportunity to feel great!

One of the most common reasons people give for not exercising is lack of time. However, it will only take 1/48th of your whole day to exercise for 30 minutes—and most people waste a lot more time than that on unproductive activities like watching TV! You probably make time for other

grooming routines like bathing, putting on make-up, and washing your clothes so you can make time for the increased activity that will do even more for your appearance, not to mention all of the psychological and health benefits you will gain.

Being physically active is more important for your health and well-being than most of the other things you think must get done each day. Many people have found that writing their exercise schedule on their calendar helps them stay on track. If they miss a session, they simply reschedule it, the way they would any other important appointment. The key is giving your health and fitness the priority that it deserves.

I have a saying: if you are too busy to exercise, then you are too busy!

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Walk a marathon...in a month! A marathon is 26 miles—why not set a goal to complete a marathon by walking 1 mile nearly every day in November (or 2 miles 3- 4 times a week, or 3 miles 2-3 times a week—you get the picture.) Our greatest journeys sometimes begin by simply walking out the door.

Nutrition Essentials: All Foods Fit

Fueling your body is your natural response to hunger. However, when you are trying to lose weight, you may experience conflict between what comes naturally, and what you think you are supposed to do. When you stand in front of your open refrigerator at home, what goes through your mind? “I shouldn't eat that; it is too fattening.” “Hmmm. I wonder how many carbs that has?” “I guess I should eat this because it is healthy, but I really want something else.” “Boy, I wish I was allowed to eat that!”

This “good” food, “bad” food approach is common and may be contributing to your struggle with eating and weight. To make matters worse, many people feel confused about what they are “supposed” to eat since the rules seem to change frequently. People label foods to help them make healthier choices, but it takes a lot of effort to avoid all of the “bad” foods and consume only the “good” ones.

The truth is that all foods contain various quantities of nutrients and calories that are required for daily living. Some foods are more nutritionally beneficial than others—but that doesn't justify labeling them as “good” or “bad.” That kind of black and white thinking can sabotage your efforts to make healthy lifestyle changes.

The fact is all foods fit. There are three simple but essential principles for effectively implementing the “all foods fit” approach: Balance, Variety, and Moderation.

“Balance” refers to the importance of providing your body with all of its necessary nutrients. “Variety” refers to eating an assortment of different foods which promotes overall health and enjoyment. “Moderation” refers to portion sizes but should not be confused with weighing and measuring food. These extreme methods are not necessary. The best way to determine if you have had enough is to listen to your cues of hunger and satiety.

As you can see, this approach does not rely on willpower (or more accurately “won't” power!). However, it does require increased awareness, basic knowledge, and new skills. When all foods fit and you use the principles of balance, variety, and moderation to guide you, the food you eat can help you build optimal health without dieting.

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Websighting: Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. Features links to Dietary Guidelines for Americans, Food Guide Pyramid, Interactive Healthy Eating Index, and The Physical Activity Tool. <http://www.usda.gov/cnpp>

Just Released...

Am I Hungry? What To Do When Diets Don't Work
By Michelle May, M.D. with Lisa Galper, Psy.D. and Janet Carr, M.S., R.D.
(Paperback, 240 pages, \$15.95)

Finally, the antidote to ineffective dieting! *Am I Hungry?* is a rational, comprehensive, step-by-step guide to weight management. This multi-dimensional team has constructed a beautifully simple system using the innovative Eating Cycle, compelling stories to illustrate important concepts, and evidence-based nutrition and fitness advice that anyone can follow. Each chapter includes practical strategies for re-establishing hunger as the primary cue for eating, balancing eating for enjoyment with eating for health, and finding joy in physical activity. This book will help those who struggle with food and weight build sustainable healthy attitudes and behaviors, and more satisfying, fulfilling lives.

- Rediscover simple, yet powerful tools for knowing when, what, and how much to eat
- Stop obsessing about food, eating, and your weight—and free yourself to live the fulfilling life you deserve
- Experience the pleasure of eating the foods you love without guilt
- Learn the truth about nutrition without confusing, arbitrary rules
- Never again exercise to earn food or punish yourself for eating
- Boost your metabolism and increase your energy and fitness painlessly
- Nourish your body, mind, and spirit to build optimal health, energy, and joy

Available at <http://amihungry.com/book.shtml>

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