

Stocking their toolbox: Bariatric self-help workbooks

By Nina Crowley, MS, RD, LD



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Self help workbooks can offer a daily way to check in even when patients are most engaged in their program, attending multiple medical appointments, seeing the dietitian and psychologist frequently and attending nutrition classes and support groups. Surgery offers a powerful tool to help patients control portions and get full quickly on solid foods. However, as most of us who work in bariatric nutrition know, surgery does not help resolve maladaptive eating habits and emotional eating that may have led to excess weight to begin with. Even for those who do not seem to struggle in the first 2 years while weight loss is somewhat "effortless" due to the powerful effects of surgical restriction, early satiety, depressed appetite hormones, and malabsorption, long term weight maintenance is a different story.

Bariatric surgery brings a feeling of fullness into the patient's consciousness in a dramatically amplified way, different than they may have ever felt before (1). Prior to surgery, many obese patients have learned to ignore the inner regulatory signals that are intended to signal hunger and satiety. Inattention to the psychophysiological experience of hunger, eating, and satiety may be precisely why they came to be your patient! Surgery is an effective tool for reversing weight gain, but has limitations when working against years of dysfunctional eating habits and lack of attention to the subjective experience of hunger, eating, and satiety.

No matter how much we educate or use motivational interviewing to facilitate patients to establish a healthier relationship with food, the experience is very unique to the individual. Learning to eat mindfully, with full attention to the experience of eating, is an invaluable skill for individuals who have had, or are considering, bariatric surgery.

Bariatric Surgery

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While we wish we could send every patient home with their very own bariatric dietitian and psychologist, most patients need to have an entire toolbox full of support tools to make their lifestyle changes permanent. While the internet offers many options including a plethora of online support groups and chat forums, bariatric dietitians should have credible go-to resources they feel comfortable suggesting when patients are looking for extra support.



Self-help tools

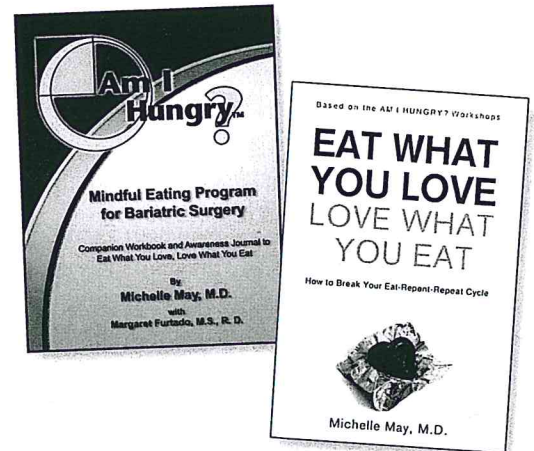
So just what is an overworked, under-reimbursed, overcommitted bariatric dietitian to do? Enter Michelle May and Margaret Furtado! Here are two resources designed specifically for bariatric surgery patients to meet this exact need! The workbooks reviewed below are designed to help prevent, identify, and resolve the mindless habits and emotional eating issues that may lead to problems after bariatric surgery.

Am I Hungry? Mindful Eating Program for Bariatric Surgery

(2 books) by Michelle May, MD with Margaret Furtado, MS, RD (www.amihungry.com/Mindful-Eating-Program-for-Bariatric-Surgery.shtml)

- *Am I Hungry? Mindful Eating Program for Bariatric Surgery Companion Workbook and Journal* (2)
- *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat: How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle* (3)

The workbook/journal is broken into 8 workshops to complement chapters in the *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat* book. The stepwise approach helps patients to apply what they read and explore how the issues affect them personally, in their daily life. Guidance from a trained and licensed *Am I Hungry? Mindful Eating Workshop Facilitator* is recommended to complement the program.



Each workshop includes 5 important sections:

- **Think** – Mindful decision making using the Mindful Eating Cycle. Participants learn strategies and skills for staying in charge.
- **Nourish** – Clear up nutrition confusion and explain special considerations after bariatric surgery *without* a list of restrictive rules to follow.
- **Live** – The main purpose of eating is to fuel living. Increase activity and metabolism to improve health and live a fulfilling life.
- **Adjust** – How to adjust to life after bariatric surgery.
- **Awareness Journal** – Record observations about thoughts, feelings, food choices, physical activity, and other decisions.

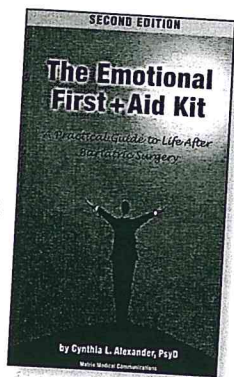
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The Emotional First + Aid Kit – A Practical Guide to Life After Bariatric Surgery

(Second Edition) by Cynthia L. Alexander, PsyD (4)

Another great resource for patients to work through is this emotional first aid kit, which encourages the “proper use of psychology” to avoid weight regain and remain successful after surgery. The book contains chapters starting with the decision to have surgery, how to prepare for surgery and psychological evaluation, self-talk, exercise, behavior modification, stress relief, comfort without food, and focuses on weight maintenance, relapse prevention, relationships that change, and weight regain. Realistic and practical tips are easy to understand and activities are throughout so patients can use this to work through at different stages before and after surgery.



Alexander says “the surgery does not force a person to change... long term diet and exercise changes are the key to success after surgery, but the surgery will not make these changes happen”, and gives readers psychological tricks to relieve stress without using food, modify unhealthy behavior, overcome hurdles to establishing a

consistent exercise program, deal with negative reactions by friends, family, and spouse to your weight loss, and prevent relapse.

Conclusion

These resources are invaluable for a number of reasons. They promote mindful eating, self-awareness, and the personal journey that is very unique to each person! The program is very structured for our “black-and-white” dichotomous thinking patients and promotes self-reflection, self-monitoring, and soul searching! If your patients ask about how they can ensure long term success, consider steering them toward these tools.

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1. Bly T, Hammond MF, Thomson R, Bagdade P. Exploring the use of mindful eating training in the bariatric population. *Bariatric Times*. 2007. <http://bariatrictimes.epubxp.com//read/clicks/F/7740089>

The American Dietetic Association Pocket Guide to Bariatric Surgery, Edition 1

Editors: Christina K. Biesemeier, MS, RD, LDN, FADA, and Jennifer Garland, MPH, RD, CDE, CD

This user-friendly pocket guide provides evidence-based data on the pre- and post-operative nutrition care of the patient undergoing bariatric surgery. It is packed full of information including diet states, recommendations for nutrition supplementation, biochemical surveillance tables for each procedure at each stage; surgery in the adolescent patient, pregnancy and nutrition support. www.eatright.org/shop

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3. May M. *Eat what you love, love what you eat: How to break your eat-repent-repeat cycle*. Austin, TX: Greenleaf Book Group Press; 2010.
4. Alexander CL. *The emotional first + aid kit: A practical guide to life after bariatric surgery, 2nd edition*. Westchester, PA: Matrix Medical Communications; 2009