

WORKSHEET ONE

Understanding your relationship to food

The Many Meanings Of Food

There are many roles that food plays in a person's life. Socially food has a huge role in both historical and modern society. Food provides nourishment it is central to our socialization, and is the place where we meet as families, friends, groups, and partners. It is the center of cultural rituals, hence it is not just about eating but about the wider context it represents. There are also many types of foods associated with different cultural and ethnic groups, traditions and celebrations. In some cultures there are rules about how and when people eat.

Think back to when you were growing up in your family of origin and what food meant to you and your family, and how you have integrated that into your adult life, which is now a normal behaviour.

Worksheet one

The role of food in my family of origin

What was food like in your family of origin i.e. what, where and when did you eat?

What were the common sayings around food? i.e. "Clean your plate"

Was food used as a treat or a punishment for you?

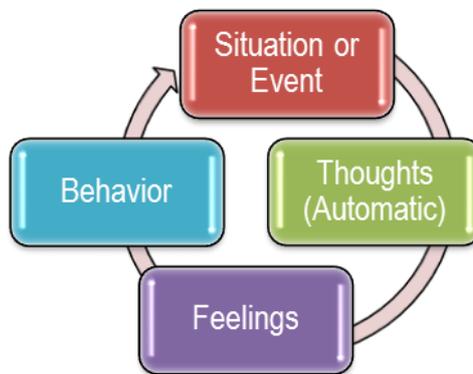
Were there issues around weight, body image, shape and size in your family, did anyone else have a problem?

What did you learn then, that you still do now?

How Does It Work

Our behaviour around food and eating can feel so automatic that we don't see the sequences or consequences. We are not always aware of the feelings or thoughts that precede our actions. This is because at first it is so foreign, but with practice, we will be able to incorporate this skill into our lives.

Worksheet two The Cycle of Change (Cycle of Emotional Eating)



Situation or event:
Automatic thoughts:
Feelings:
Behavior:
What could I do differently?

What could I do differently?

Consider the following 10 questions

1. What does the diagram show about the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour?
2. Do these elements have a knock on effect?
3. Do they seem to create each other?
4. Look at the answers in the circle. Which if any of those reactions could be changed?
5. Could the thoughts about the situation be different?
6. What is the evidence for those thoughts?
7. Could the feelings about the event be changed?
8. Would it be possible to act differently?
9. What would an alternative response have been?
10. Think of one reaction that could be changed. Insert this in the appropriate place in the Cycle of Change diagram above.

Core Beliefs

Core beliefs are the long-standing views that we hold about ourselves, other people, the world and the future. Usually formed during childhood or other important times in our lives, they serve us as a sort of 'guide' to life – they tell us how things are. We filter our experiences according to our beliefs - in a way, its how we make sense of the world.

As we grow up we may 'swallow' certain beliefs, feelings and behaviours from our parents and caregivers. Sometimes these will be about eating and food, we may find ourselves repeating the same emotional responses, beliefs, actions, that our parents or caregivers had, even though consciously we don't want to. **But** becoming aware of this helps us to challenge these beliefs.

Think about:-

- How do core beliefs develop?
- How to tackle core beliefs
- Why is it important to be aware of our core beliefs?
- What are thoughts?
- Balancing our thoughts process
- Processing our negative thinking
- What are behaviours?
- How to change behaviours step by step

Part B: Relationships To Food

- **WHY DO WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SAY NO?**
- **OVEREATING AND HABITS**
- **WHAT IS OVER EATING?**
- **WHY DO WE COMFORT EAT?**
- **THE CYCLE OF EMOTIONAL EATING**
- **THE CYCLE OF CHANGE**
- **GOALS**

*One of the most important human rights is the right to make choices. Of all the choices we make one of the most important is the right to say **NO** to a request by another person. Saying **NO** is also one of the most difficult things we have to learn to do.*

Why Do We Find It Difficult To Say No?

Do you find it difficult to say no if you are asked to do something even if you don't want to do it?

When we were young, one of the first words we learnt to say was 'NO'. However as we grow we begin to lose our self-confidence and self-esteem, and begin to say YES instead to all of the requests asked of us.

People with low self-esteem very often have a lack of assertiveness and think they have to meet the expectations of everyone. It is very hard for them to set limits with others. They can sometimes feel ashamed or guilty if they say 'NO'. But if you do things against your will, you may end up feeling used and resentful.

Make a list of reasons why you find it difficult to say 'NO'.

- Many people find it difficult to say 'No' there are reasons for this:
- Primarily most people fear saying no in case they upset someone.
- Shyness can make you tongue-tied when you really want to say 'No'.
- The desire to be liked by others can make you want to always please them. If you are insecure you will want to seek the approval of others by pleasing them.
- Fear of the person making the request.
- Good manners, social conditioning or the desire to be a hero or be seen as being good can prevent you from saying 'No'.
- When you equally desire the favour of the other person, you will find it difficult to say 'No'.
- When you are generally slow to act, your hesitation may be misconstrued as a 'Yes'.

Moment of choice, the goal is to reach a point where you are able to say "I need to think about that and will let you know." This will allow you a moment of choice to weigh up the request and how you want to respond in a way that's helpful to you.

Think of ways to say 'NO'

- Thank you for thinking of me, but that is not possible this time.
- I can't do this right now.
- NO, thanks. Not this time. Thank you for asking.
- Sorry, but NO.

- Please accept that I cannot come.
- I'd rather not.

Make a list of the advantages are of being able to say 'No'

- You will start to feel empowered and confident.
- You will save yourself from situations that might inconvenience, embarrass or endanger you by raising your objection instantly.
- You will have another opportunity to review your decision. You can still say 'Yes' after having time to evaluate your initial decision.

Saying 'No' when it matters is about self-assertion. Only the truly confident or assertive can promptly say 'No' when it is not in their best interest to say 'Yes'. Contrary to your fear, you will discover that others will respect and value you for your stands even though it might not be always favourable to them.

Overeating & Habits

Over eating or eating too much is often about learning to say NO, to both yourself and others. Many of us in this group have a problem saying NO to food. Most of us overeat from time to time, and some of us often feel we have eaten more than we should have. Almost everyone overeats taking an extra helping at a party or a barbecue, or eating cookies during a late-night study session. Overeating is a way to use food to cope with stress and other negative emotions.

Overeating significant amounts is a form of addiction, where a lot of the day is spent thinking about food and what you are going to eat, when you're going to eat. In your mind's eye, you are looking at food as much more than something that tastes good, or gives you energy to survive. In your mind's eye food is the substance of soothing and relief. It is a way of filling a whole that sadly will never be filled with food.

It may be comforting for a brief moment, but then reality sets back in, along with regret and self-loathing. Overeating often leads to weight gain and obesity, which only reinforces the cycle of negative thoughts.

This reinforces feelings of self-loathing and it becomes a vicious cycle: eating to feel better, feeling even worse, and then turning back to food for relief.

What does overeating mean to you?

Can you describe it?

What does overeating do to our bodies?

Over time, compulsive overeating usually leads to obesity. Obesity, in turn, causes numerous medical complications, including:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Gallbladder disease
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Certain types of cancer
- Osteoarthritis
- Joint and muscle pain
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Sleep apnoea

It can be difficult to overcome overeating. Unlike other addictions, your “drug” is necessary for survival, so you don’t have the option of avoiding it. Instead, you must develop a healthier relationship with food—a relationship that’s based on meeting your nutritional needs, not your emotional ones.

Why Do We Comfort Eat?

Humans are hard wired to connect food to soothing. When a new born baby cries it is given milk, the milk fulfils some need and the baby feels better. Over time baby learns that this substance takes away uncomfortable feelings. As the baby becomes a child it learns to look for comfort in other places usually people. When a toddler feels bad maybe falls over it usually turns to a caregiver (Mum) to be soothed thus moving away from the notion that food makes things better. Things go wrong when the caregiver is unavailable, perhaps physically or emotionally absent and not available to soothe the child’s pain. Or the caregiver uses food instead of a cuddle to make it right. Food again becomes intrinsically linked with the notion of soothing. The early lessons in life always stay with us. But, unfortunately for many of us, these using food to feel better or comfort-eating often comes back later in life and cause weight loss havoc!

We rarely think about learned behaviours, we simply do things unconsciously. People learn behaviours at an early age and never question them. For example as a child not being allowed to have pudding until the meal was finished and unconsciously continuing this behaviour into your adult life. Another example is having a mug of hot milk with biscuits before you go to bed, even though your body does not need the extra calories.

Food can dilute, soften or dull emotions we term "unpleasant" like anger, resentment, frustration, guilt and hatred. Even emotions we label "desirable" can be so intense, food may be used to dull the feeling back to a manageable or tolerable level. At other times we may eat or substitute for a lack of feeling. Many of us may find that we eat when we are bored,

especially in the evening in front of the TV, for a while the feeling will disappear and then we have the feelings of self-hatred, humiliation, and shame and therefore the cycle continues.

The Cycle of Emotional Eating

Someone else's opinion (real or imagined) of how you look, or your own judgement of yourself



Makes you feel bad, ugly, worthless, disgusting, etc



So you start to tell yourself what a loathsome, horrible sight you are



And so in order to escape from these horrible thoughts and feelings



You soothe yourself with food



Either you eat or binge or you vow to deny yourself food

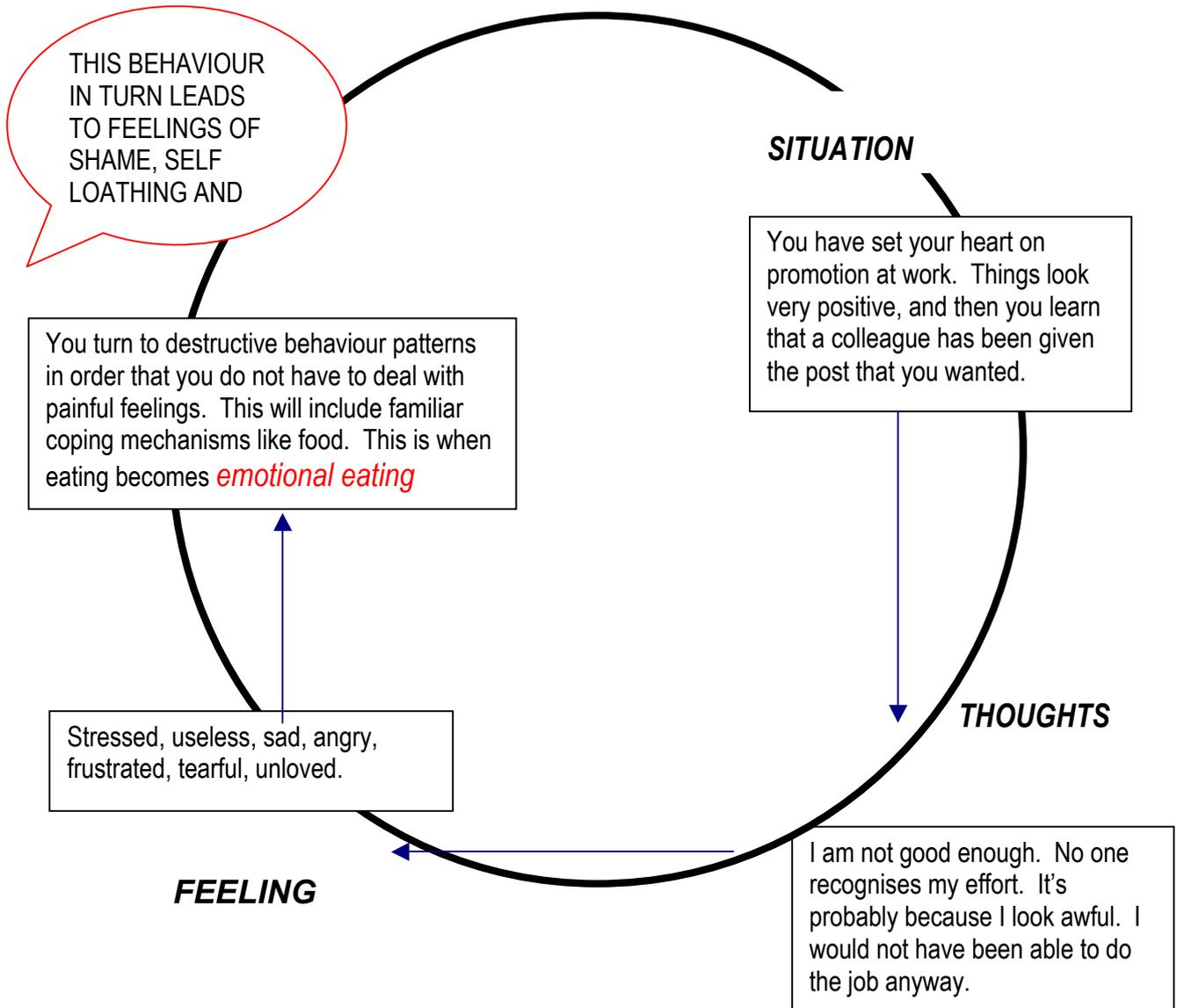


So your disordered eating is worse and you
Still feel bad, or even worse about yourself

*Understanding Your Eating
Professor Julia Buckroyd 2011*

THE CYCLE OF EMOTIONAL EATING

Example



The Cycle of Emotional Eating Challenge Sheet

<p>The event or situation that triggered my turning to food</p>	
<p>The automatic thoughts I had after this event</p>	
<p>How did I feel?</p>	
<p>What did I do?</p>	
<p>How could I have thought differently about the original event or situation?</p>	

Complete the Cycle of Change Challenge Sheet and think about what you could have done differently.

My Smart Goals		
GOALS	To reach my goal I need	Things that can help me reach my goals
GOAL 1.		
GOAL 2.		
GOAL 3.		
GOAL 4.		
GOAL 5.		

In order to get the most from this programme it is important that you set yourself achievable GOALS. Use this work sheet to set yourself five GOALS that you feel able to achieve over the time you are coming to these sessions. Once you have decided upon your GOALS. Think about what you need to do to achieve them and what could stand in your way.