

# Improve your relationship with food

If you feel as though now is a good time to readdress your relationship with food below are some quick tips that may help you figure out what is going on and how change it.

## Notice your thoughts

A key indicator that food is becoming an issue is the amount of time you spend thinking and planning your next meal. Obsessing about what you're going to have and having a strict time that you can eat it, food being the highlight of your day and then planning how you will atone for the calories you've eaten is an indicator that your disordered eating is taking over.

## Obesogenic thinking

If you are following a popular diet and find yourself 'falling off the wagon' and having a blow out, it's another indicator that your body may not be getting the nutrients that it needs, it feels deprived/starved and therefore your brain is leading you to think about fatty sugary foods and to gorge on them. Thinking to yourself 'I've blown it now I may as well eat the whole cake' is a sign that you're not thinking about food rationally the drive to eat the whole lot is probably down to your body's starvation. Losing weight doesn't mean you have to be hungry all the time. Eat a range of foods rich in nutrients with plenty of fruit and veg in order to give your body what it really needs.

## Sugar rush

Cravings for sugar and fat laden foods is so common when people have been used to dieting for long or short periods. As your hypothalamus believes you are starving, survival instinct kicks in and your brain makes you crave things that it needs to survive which is glucose and fat hence the cravings for less nutritious foods such as biscuits, chocolate, crisps and cake.

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## Co-dependency

Food and your relationship with it are complex. It is easy to use food as an emotional regulator to help you feel calmer, happier or even as part of your bedtime routine. If food has become more than fuel and is your go to as a way to block out difficult emotions such as sadness, anxiousness, low self-esteem or anger it may be time to talk to someone.

## Tips to help readdress your relationship with food

### Record

Keep a record of what you're eating, is it balanced (plenty of fruit, veg, beans, pulses, dairy and alternatives? Protein carbs and brown fat and plenty of micronutrients and essential amino acids? Write it down or keep a note in your phone, try to avoid using calorie counting Apps as they have been proven to exacerbate eating issues. By keeping a record, you are bringing into consciousness your food choices and any patterns that may be fuelling an unhealthy relationship with food.

### Relax

Relax before mealtimes and eat mindfully. This is important as meals times can be crowded with phones, TV's or books. Use mealtimes to really focus on the food and the people you are with. If breakfast is an issue due to time find recipes for things you can make the day before. Make your table a pleasant environment. Use your best cutlery and china, make it a cosy spot at the table or clutter free whatever works for you but reclaim mealtimes as your own. Set aside enough time each day to eat mindfully and purposefully. The purpose being to refuel, enjoy and relax.

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## The power of 3

Try to eat three main eating events a day minimum. Three meals a day is being labelled as an old-fashioned ideology it is based on people's fuel levels and when they need to refuel. If you're getting a balanced meal from it, you should be able to sustain your energy levels throughout the day. Three to 6 smaller meals a day keeps your metabolism going, keeps you fuller for longer and helps you sustain your energy levels.

## Danger Zone

Watch the 2 – 4pm slot. The afternoon slump where you come over so tired you can barely keep your eyes open some days. This may well be down to what you chose to eat for lunch. Essentially all that has happened is you have sent your body on a blood sugar rollercoaster at lunch time, your brain told your pancreas to release a lot of insulin which has now made your blood sugar crash resulting in you feeling tired and weak and reaching for chocolate. Keeping a record and choosing food with a range of nutrients should help beat the slump.

4pm is when our bodies circadian rhythm changes. Our body switches from day system which is serotonin based to night system which is melatonin based and makes us sleepy and 'fake hungry for a sugary pick me up'. This happens most days and can be combatted through planning in a protein rich snack between the hours of 2pm and 4pm to keep your body going during the transition from day to night.

## Take back control

Note how many times in a week you have felt out of control with food, if the number you have felt out of control with food is of concern then get in touch. People who get their eating issues under control sooner rather than later have a much better prognosis for recovery.

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## Move

Move for fun. Find an activity that you like, which gives you good mind-body connection. Yoga, Pilates, Zumba anything that gets your body moving. Reconnecting with your body can give you an appreciation for how strong and capable your body is. This appreciation can spill over into your food choices and change the way you think and feel about your body what you want to fuel it with.

Sometimes people need help to readdress their relationship with food and bespoke therapy can help. Get in touch if you'd like to talk to me and start taking back control 07784105769.

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