

2023

BEYOND THE PLATE: A COMPASSIONATE WAY FORWARD

Workbook

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WEEK 4





REFLECTION QUESTIONS



TOOLS FOR EMOTIONAL EATERS

Congratulations on completing Week 4 of "Beyond the Plate: A Compassionate Way Forward"! In this webinar, we discussed the emotional role of food, and the range of emotional experiences many of us have with food.

This workbook will provide supplemental reflection prompts for those who want to further explore these concepts. *(Some questions were adapted from the Intuitive Eating Workbook, by Evelyn Tribole & Elyse Resch.)*

I. We'll start by exploring the emotional role that food plays. Food is what keeps us alive, so of course it's what we seek for comfort. Emotional eating is part of the human experience. As we discussed in the presentation, there is also a range to "emotional eating." It can feel frustrating, disconnected, uncomfortable, stressful, but it can also feel fun, satisfying, enjoyable, entertaining, or celebratory. Spend some time reviewing the following questions to consider the emotional role of food in your life. ***This topic may bring up some difficult feelings. If you have the space to reflect on this, proceed. If you need support with this, consider utilizing the suggested resources on pages 7-8 to find help.***



EMOTIONAL EATING

1. Reflect on moments where you felt like you were emotionally eating. Describe a few scenarios that come to mind. Can you identify what types of emotions or circumstances led to emotional eating?



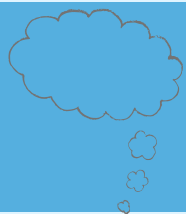
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

2. Refer to Question 1. What emotions were you feeling during each of these moments? Would you categorize each example as positive, negative, or neutral?

3. What makes an emotional eating experience positive? Consider celebrations, traditions, parties, etc.

4. What makes an emotional eating experience neutral? Is there such a thing?

5. What makes an emotional eating experience negative?



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II. As we've already been discussing, emotional eating refers to a wide range of experiences and emotions– positive and negative. Whether emotional eating is supporting your wellbeing or not is up to you. Rather than automatically shaming or guiltting yourself for eating for emotional reasons, try to practice nonjudgmental curiosity to understand more about the circumstances. What are you feeling? What do you need? Sometimes it's food, and sometimes it's not. The goal here is not to eliminate emotional eating, but to help raise emotional awareness, so you can better recognize your needs, and expand your coping tool kit, if necessary, to effectively cope with emotions. ***If you find it especially difficult to do this work, please reach out to a mental health professional for support. You don't have to do this alone.***



COPING WITH KINDNESS

6. Keep in mind that physical hunger can sometimes feel like emotional hunger. If you feel like you have a pattern of emotional eating, first check in with your overall food intake. Is it possible that you did not eat enough today? How long has it been since your last meal or snack? Overall, has your intake over the past few days felt sufficient?

****Note:** Here are some of the different ways our bodies might experience physical/biological hunger (though everyone is different, and may feel some symptoms but not others). Check off any symptoms you're experiencing, or tend to experience throughout the day. Would it be possible to prioritize consistent eating throughout the day to adequately fuel your body? Generally, 3 meals and 2-3 snacks over the course of the day is an adequate baseline eating pattern -- but your needs may vary. Please reach out to a Registered Dietitian for individualized guidance.

Stomach: A variety of sensations including rumbling, gurgling, gnawing, or emptiness.

Throat and esophagus: Dull ache, gnawing.

Head: Cloudy thinking, light-headedness, headache, difficulty focusing and concentrating. Experiencing more thoughts about food and eating.

Mood: Irritability or crankiness. Perhaps you have to work harder to refrain from snapping, even though you don't present as irritable to the outside world.

Energy: Waning, perhaps even to the point of sleepiness. There can be a dullness and even apathy toward doing anything.

Numbness: Overall lethargy.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

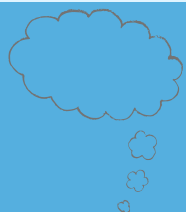
7. If you feel like you have eaten enough, and notice yourself eating food to cope, check in with your emotions. Take a five minute time-out. Ask: What am I feeling right now? Become aware of your range of feelings. **Refer to a feelings wheel, if needed. Choose a more general feeling or a specific feeling- whichever resonates with you most.



The Feeling Wheel

Source: Greater New York Hospital Association
<https://tinyurl.com/mw6n6nn9>

8. Ask: Is this experience positive, neutral, or negative? Is eating food helping me feel better? In what way?



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

9. Ask: If you feel like eating food is not exactly addressing your need, ask yourself: What do I really need, right now, to deal with my current feelings? Refer to ideas below or come up with your own. It's okay if you don't know what you need. The action of just checking-in to your possible needs is a great start.

<u>Distraction</u>	<u>Support</u>	<u>Deal Directly with Feeling</u>	<u>Self-care</u>
Change environment	Call a friend	Write in a journal	Set boundaries
Watch a funny movie	Email a friend	Listen to music that matches my feelings	Practice positive affirmations or compassionate inner dialogue
Find amusing content online	Text a friend	Create a to-do list	Carve out "alone time"
Jam to music	Reach out to a trusted family member	Write a letter to yourself	Sleep or rest
Go out with a friend	Talk with a spiritual advisor within your community	Sit with your feelings for 10 minutes	Write in a journal
Go to store	Reach out to friends within a safe online community or support group	Reframe the thoughts that are causing the feeling. Is there another way to view the situation?	Take a walk outside
Play with your pet	Talk with a therapist	Process with a therapist	Silence your phone or take a break from the computer

10. Make a list of activities beyond these examples that interest you. What soothes you? What are you passionate about? What have you always wanted to learn or practice? Which activities would help you process a certain emotion? Which would provide distraction, support, or self-care?

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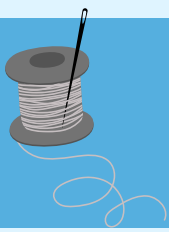
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

11. Also consider who you might reach out to in your network for various needs (e.g., someone to vent to, someone for advice, someone to laugh with, someone who is comforting, etc.). Make a list of individuals that you feel comfortable reaching out to. If needed, include specific organizations from pages 7-8 that you might find helpful and would like to research.

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12. If you encounter an opportunity to practice some of the above exercises, what did you try? Did it help? What sensations did you experience? Did you feel relaxed or did you still feel heightened emotions? Did you still feel preoccupied with food? Again, if this feels difficult, and you would like support while processing these experiences, please reach out to a professional for help.

Note: Emotional eating is a normal human experience, and is not a "setback." Each experience is information. If you are trying to build out your emotional tool kit, it takes time, and sometimes extra support to learn and try new coping strategies. You may also need to periodically take a rest from emotional work. Over time and with extra guidance if needed, your emotional "muscles" will get stronger. Do what you can, and lean into your community or seek out a support network if needed.



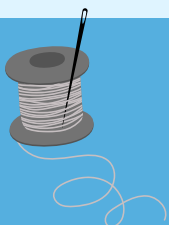
THREADS TO FOLLOW

III. As we have discussed, emotional eating experiences can include positive moments, such as celebrations, special memories, and cultural traditions. It can also be soothing and a relatively safe way to cope with tough emotions. However, if you are finding it difficult to process emotional experiences, please do not hesitate to reach out for support. Refer to the following organizations and directories for mental health support or nutrition counseling. You are not alone.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES

- Michigan Stay Well: www.michigan.gov/staywell
- Mental Health Resources in MI, organized by MSU: <https://engage.msu.edu/upcoming-events/2022/june/forum-on-student-mental-health/mental-health-resources-in-michigan>
- Find a Therapist in Michigan: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/michigan>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.findtreatment.gov
- Mental Health America: www.mhanational.org
- Open Path Psychotherapy Collective: www.openpathcollective.org
- Michigan 2-1-1 directory: <https://mi211.org>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.findtreatment.gov
- Mental Health America: www.mhanational.org
- Open Path Psychotherapy Collective: www.openpathcollective.org
- Therapy for Black Girls: <https://therapyforblackgirls.com>
- Therapy for Black Men: <https://therapyforblackmen.org>
- Catholic Charities USA: <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org>
- Therapy for Latinx: <https://www.therapyforlatinx.com>
- Life is Precious™/La Vida es Preciosa: <https://www.comunilifelip.org>
- Asian Mental Health Collective: <https://www.asianmhc.org>
- Asian American Psychological Association: <https://aapaonline.org>
- National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network: www.NQTTN.com
- Desi LGBTQ+ Helpline for South Asians: <https://www.deqh.org>
- We R Native, For Native Youth, By Native Youth: <https://www.wernative.org>
- American Indian Health and Family Services: <https://aihfs.org>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness – Michigan chapter: <https://namimi.org>





THREADS TO FOLLOW

NUTRITION PROFESSIONALS & EATING DISORDER CARE

- Eating Disorder Registered Dietitians & Professionals (EDRDPRO): <https://edrdpro.com/resources/haes-informed-websites/>
- Michigan Eating Disorders Alliance resource page: <https://www.mieda.org/Be-Informed/Resources>
- FEDUP- Fighting Eating Disorders in Underrepresented Populations: A Trans+ & Intersex Collective: <https://fedupcollective.org>
- Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association (MEDA) <https://www.medainc.org>
- Find a Certified Intuitive Eating Counselor: <https://www.intuitiveeating.org/certified-counselors/>
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Find a Nutrition Expert: <https://www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert>
- RD's for Neurodiversity: <https://www.rdsforneurodiversity.com>
- Diversify Dietetics Dietitian of Color Directory: <https://www.diversifydietetics.org/rd-of-color-directory>
- Mind Yoga Body Michigan Eating Disorder Treatment: <https://mindyogabody.com>
- Center for Eating Disorders: <https://www.center4ed.org>
- Sanford Behavioral Health Eating Disorder Treatment: <https://sanfordbehavioralhealth.com/>
- Nalgon Positivity Pride, Trauma-informed, Harm-reduction support for Eating Disorders <https://www.nalgonapositivitypride.com>





until next week!

*"Our feelings are our most genuine paths
to knowledge."*

-Audre Lorde

writer, poet, professor, activist

