

# What is Appetite Awareness Training (AAT)?

It helps us to...

- Take charge of our eating decisions
- Learn to tune back into our bodies' internal signals of hunger and fullness
- Eat when we are hungry and stop/choose not to when we are satisfied
- Learn to stop eating before our stomach becomes uncomfortably full.

# Why appetite monitoring?

- As babies, we have great internal appetite regulation
- Variety of things disrupt that body trust:
  - Taught that food is for entertainment/connection/celebration, etc.
    - Get used to eating richer food, easier to eat past fullness
    - Get more full than needed becomes normal
  - Desire to change body >> Diets
    - Sometimes for health
    - Other times because of unrealistic thin ideal in our society
  - “obesogenic” environment
    - Foods that are more salty/sugary/fatty than in nature, our bodies normal hunger/fullness signals get disrupted

# Why appetite monitoring?

- Once a person becomes (or is told they are) overweight, they often get into a diet cycle
  - » New diet rules, ignore hunger
  - » Appetite/cravings increase
  - » Respond to cravings, “what the heck”, ignore fullness
- Goal of AAT is to get back in touch with our hunger and fullness cues and be able to listen to them to maintain a healthy weight
  - » First goal is stabilizing (get off the yo-yo)

# Eating a Meal

Think of a time you ate...

- Why did you start eating? What are the reasons we might start eating?
  - » Hunger (what is your level of awareness?)
  - » Meal time
  - » Food there/given to us
  - » Emotional reasons:
    - To cure boredom
    - To celebrate
    - To participate in a significant event (wedding, etc)
    - To numb or distract ourselves

# Eating a Meal

Think of a time you ate...

- Why did you stop eating? What are the reasons we might stop eating?
  - » Fullness level (again, how aware?)
  - » Food gone from plate/serving size
  - » Meal time over
  - » Event ended
- Note: none of these reading for starting/stopping are “good” or “bad,” but we want to start realizing which ones are helpful/unhelpful to us

# AAT Model

- Open: [Colorful AAT model.pdf](#)
  - » This is a lot of info at once. The green path = normal eating, this is the goal. The other paths are patterns we might develop that take us away from normal eating
- Where are you now?
- What needs to change for you to get to green “normal eating” path?

# Overeating vs bingeing

- Definition of a binge:
- An episode of binge eating is characterized by both of the following:
  - » Eating, in a discrete period of time (e.g., within any 2-hour period), an amount of food that is definitely larger than what most people would eat in a similar period of time under similar circumstances.
  - » A sense of lack of control over eating during the episode (e.g., a feeling that one cannot stop eating or control what or how much one is eating).
- The binge eating episodes are associated with **three (or more)** of the following:
  - » Eating much more rapidly than normal.
  - » Eating until feeling uncomfortably full.
  - » Eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry.
  - » Eating alone because of feeling embarrassed by how much one is eating.
  - » Feeling disgusted with oneself, depressed, or very guilty afterward.
- **Marked distress** regarding binge eating is present.
- The binge eating occurs, on average, **at least once a week for 3 months**.
- The binge eating is not associated with the recurrent use of inappropriate compensatory behaviors (e.g., purging) as in bulimia nervosa and does not occur exclusively during the course of bulimia nervosa or anorexia nervosa.

# Note on bingeing

- Appetite awareness is evidence-based to aid in reducing binges. Depending on the frequency and severity of binges, there are also times we refer to UNC's Center for Excellence in Eating Disorders for help with severe binge eating. If you experience binge eating, let us know and we'll assess together.



# Creating lasting behavior change: be the scientist, not the judge

- Being the scientist allows us to take a curious attitude towards what is happening, and to learn from it
- When we are the “judge,” we deem our behavior bad and sometimes want to punish ourselves. Learning tends to stop when we go into shame-and-blame mode
- Being the scientist is the opposite of white-knuckling, have-tos and shoulds, day-1 diet mindset, and it allows us to get new results!

# Getting Started with Appetite Monitoring

- Start using a paper tracker or the app
  - » Paper tracker: Rate hunger before eating, fullness after, and rate the meal experience as negative, neutral, or positive
  - » App = Mindful Eating Coach 2, available on iOS and google play
    - When getting started, click “after eating” to rate your hunger/fullness and evaluate the meal
    - Once you are familiar with the tools, you can use the “before eating” button to use your AAT skills before starting to eat



## Decide Now:

- How will you track?
  - » App vs print worksheet vs. a notebook
- How will you remember?
  - » Where leave paper tracker? Set alarms on phone?

## Happy Experimenting!