

you take in. Thus, it is critical that you eat the type of food you want and that you eat slowly and mindfully. You need to enjoy what you eat to the fullest so the food is able to do its job, which is to make you feel better.

Alternatives for Urges to Eat When Not Hungry

Activities designed to alter physical sensations and emotions directly so you can self-soothe without eating:

- Take a nap or go to bed early.
- Practice breathing exercises (e.g., somato-respiratory integration exercises), meditation, or prayer.
- Listen to a relaxation audiotape.
- Watch a yoga video.
- Do some physical activity (like walking, stretches, or exercise).
- Take medication if pain is the feeling you are trying to reduce.
- Sing, listen to music, or dance.
- Get a massage or learn self-care techniques to reduce arousal (self-massage for feet or hands or use a theracane; alternative practices such as jin shin and acupressure).
- Take a hot bath, sauna, or hot tub.

Activities that are highly positive or engaging so they distract you or provide pleasure without eating:

- Watch a movie.
- Go shopping (window-shop if you can't afford to buy).
- Talk on the phone.
- Go visit someone.
- Play video games, surf the Web, or e-mail a friend.
- Write letters or write in a journal.
- Read for pleasure. Read inspirational and self-help books. (They give you new ideas to consider and boost motivation.)

Activities that are incompatible with eating:

- Get (or give yourself) a manicure or pedicure.

- Tend to your garden.
- Do some knitting or needlepoint.
- Paint a picture.
- Create crafts.
- Develop new hobbies (like photography, origami, or flower arranging).

List any other activities that work will for you: _____

Step three: Identify and challenge thoughts that are encouraging you to eat even though you know you aren't hungry. What thoughts cause you the most difficulty?

- I deserve a treat.
- I want to celebrate.
- I want to avoid doing something else (procrastinate).
- I feel bored.
- Food will help me keep doing something I don't want to be doing (like studying).
- Food will make me feel better.
- Other: _____

Ask yourself:

Can I find a nonfood way to treat myself or celebrate? _____

Can I do something else to distract myself? _____

Am I willing to try a nonfood way to feel better? _____

Can I ask someone else to distract me or help me feel better (get support)? _____

Identify and challenge the excuses you give yourself that keep you from trying some activity other than eating. What excuses cause you the most difficulty?

- I can't think of anything else that will work.
- I don't have time for anything else.
- I've tried other things and they never work.
- I think I should be able to tolerate urges without having to distract myself.

- I think others will notice or comment on what I am doing.
- I don't like to ask others for help; it makes me feel weak or inferior.
- I think I will make others uncomfortable or diminish their pleasure in eating.
- I might be considered rude or unsociable if I don't join the eating.
- I just don't want to do what I know will work; I feel rebellious and unwilling.
- Other: _____

Identify what interferes when you try to tolerate an urge to eat without acting on it. What makes it too hard for you to just tolerate distress?

- Not eating triggers an uncomfortable feeling of deprivation. (Try finding a nonfood indulgence.)
- Not eating makes me anxious or restless. (Try using another strategy to reduce this more directly.)
- Not eating makes it harder for me to make myself do something I really need to do. (Give yourself permission to procrastinate but in a nonfood way, or set up a nonfood reward for yourself if you will just go ahead and do what you are putting off.)
- Not eating makes me feel angry and rebellious. (Practice using nonfood ways to express these feelings such as journaling, art, and talking about your feelings.)
- Other: _____

Remember the most important guideline when you are trying to find nonfood alternatives: *Don't try harder; try different.* Most of you already try hard not to eat when you know you aren't hungry. Lack of effort is not usually your problem. Lack of creativity or being stubborn is more likely the problem. You may be bullheaded and refuse to try alternatives that might work because you think you shouldn't have to do them. After all, you know many other people who don't have to do them. So, you keep doing the same old things that don't work. Instead, open your mind. Put aside your pride and stop comparing yourself to everyone else. Just figure out what works for you right now. There is always something else you can try. You just have to be willing. It is hard to develop the mind-set of being willing. You have to cultivate a willing attitude; it doesn't come naturally. I refer you to Marsha Linehan's skills training workbook (1993) if you need more help learning to do what is necessary to get the results you want. You can apply the principles in it to help you cultivate a willing attitude. Another helpful resource when you just don't feel like doing what you know would help is Winget's (2004) book about "getting a life."