



Staying Healthy AT HOME

NURTURING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

Our relationship with food is one of the longest we'll have. No matter what it has been like in the past, we have the power to create our ideal relationship with food going forward. As is true of any relationship, we must work to nurture and maintain it, keeping in mind that even in great relationships, road bumps are part of the journey. As we move toward cultivating a healthier relationship with food, the following steps may be helpful:

- 1 Examine what your relationship with food has been like and the role(s) it has played in your life.
 - How was food used or viewed when you were growing up?
 - How did you feel about food as a child? How has that changed or deepened?
 - At what point did you feel your best about your relationship with food?
- 2 Imagine that you are in your ideal relationship with food, and ask yourself:
 - What does it look and feel like?
 - What about having this relationship is most important to you?
- 3 Tune in and notice what you've been saying to yourself about food. Simply observe the thoughts, letting go of any judgment. Then, work on reframing negative thoughts.
- 4 Differentiate between physical and emotional hunger:
 - Emotional hunger comes on suddenly, sometimes in the form of specific cravings.
 - Emotional hunger is hard to satisfy and often leads to eating past the point of fullness.
 - Emotional hunger tends to be followed by feelings of regret, guilt and powerlessness.



- Emotional hunger is often a response to boredom or uncomfortable feelings.

5 Use the 'HALT' (**H**urt, **A**ngry, **L**onely, **T**ired) acronym as a reminder to pause before eating:

- Ask yourself if there's something other than food that might satisfy this hunger.
- Imagine yourself eating and consider how you'll feel afterward. Will you feel satiated or will you have regrets?
- Ask yourself where your commitment is—if it's to certain goals, how will indulging help or hurt that commitment?
- If you're craving a particular food and find that you're indeed physically hungry, start with a healthy option, and then see if the craving's still there. Oftentimes, cravings subside once we satisfy our hunger.
- If you decide to indulge in the item you're craving, try having a few bites and really savoring them. Then, pause and see if you really want more before continuing.

6 Identify current habits that may not align with your goals, as well as those you'd like to create.

7 Create a plan for how you'll navigate challenging situations as well as unstructured times.

8 Look to find ways to "feed" yourself that don't involve food. Ask yourself what you'd like to see more of in your life and start taking small steps toward building up those areas.

Remember, all relationships need continuous nurturing and tending to in order to stay healthy. Visualize the relationship you'd like to have and consider some of the steps you'll take to develop and maintain it. Write your intentions down and keep them close. Above all, practice patience and loving kindness with yourself, and reach out if you need additional support.

Additional Resources

Feeding The Hungry Heart and Breaking Free from Emotional Eating by Geneen Roth

The Pleasure Trap by Douglas J. Lisle

Breaking the Food Seduction by Neal Barnard

The End of Overeating by David Kessler

