

A Brief Mindful Eating Weight Loss Program: Facilitator Manual

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Text written in normal font is to be verbalized to the patient.

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Text written in bold indicates section headings and points to emphasize.

Session 1: Overeating and Mindfulness

Objective: *Discuss mindfulness as a way to decrease overeating.*

Homework: *Practice belly scan exercise.*

Overeating prevents weight loss

Overeating results in weight gain and happens when we eat more than our body needs. Overeating can be triggered by many things. We might overeat because we are distracted, at a buffet, or are just trying to cope with certain emotions. Learning to listen to your body's natural cues of hunger and fullness is an important step towards successful weight loss. When we ignore, or are unaware of these natural signals, we tend to eat more food than we need. By learning to tune in and to listen to our body's natural hunger and fullness signals, we can eat less and lose weight.

Tuning in to what our body tells us takes time. Over the course of this program, I will ask you to practice several exercises that will help you to become more aware of your body's hunger and fullness signals. By becoming more aware of these physical signals, you will be better able to recognize when to eat, when not to eat, and when to stop eating before you ate too much.

Mindfulness

This focused attention to your body sensations is a form of *mindfulness*. Mindfulness is a state of mind; it is being aware of everything that is happening around you and within your body. To become mindfully aware of your natural hunger and fullness signals, you need to focus your attention inwards to your body. Although this may sound simple, most of us rarely take the time to focus inwards and to listen to what our body is telling us (i.e. that it is hungry, satiated, or full). For example, have you ever gone to the movies and finished a large bag of popcorn without even realizing it? Or have you ever had the urge to munch on snacks even though you just finished a large meal? These two examples are what we call *mindless eating*. *Briefly ask patients to identify times in the day when they mindlessly eat.* When we eat mindlessly, we tend to forget or tend to ignore our body's natural signals of hunger and fullness. It is this lack of eating awareness, or mindlessness, that results in weight gain and makes it harder to lose weight.

The goal of this program is to teach you techniques to reduce your mindless eating, which will help you lose weight and keep it off in the long run. The first technique that we will practice is called a belly scan. Belly scans are a type of mindfulness exercise that help individuals learn to direct their attention inwards, that is, towards their physical body. By practicing this brief belly scan every day, you will find it easier to tune in and listen to your stomach's natural hunger and fullness signals.

Homework

Every session, I will give you a homework sheet with things that you need to work on before the next session. It is VERY IMPORTANT that you do the homework and that you bring this sheet

back to every session. *Define a strategy with the patient to make sure they put the homework sheet somewhere that they will remember to bring it back with them. For example, if they always carry a backpack with them, suggest that they keep it in their backpack so they will be sure to have it on them. You can also suggest that they put a reminder in their smartphone so they make extra sure that they don't forget.* This week, I want you to practice the belly scan exercise using the instructions provided in your session 1 handouts. Tuning in to your body signals, especially your stomach signals, is a crucial step in the program, so the more you practice this exercise, the less demanding it will be.

Session 2: Mindful Eating

Objective: *Explain mindful eating and do an exercise to practice it.*

Homework: *Practice mindful eating at home.*

Review session 1 homework. Ask the patients if they had any troubles practicing the belly scan exercise. Address any difficulties and/or questions. Some patients may express a dislike, or apprehension, to the belly scan. This is normal. Acknowledge their apprehension and remind them that this exercise is meant to help them tune in to their stomach signals. By learning to tune into their stomach and its physical sensations, they will be better able to identify and recognize when they truly need to eat and when they should stop eating.

****Please Complete the Physician/Patient Check-In Form before proceeding with the session****

There are many times in the day when we are not aware of what we are eating or how much we are eating because we are too distracted, too busy, too tired, or too preoccupied with other things like work, family, or even our emotions (stress, irritation, anxiety, etc.). This is what we call *mindless eating*. The opposite of mindless eating is what we call *mindful eating*. Mindful eating is about being totally focused on your eating experience. When we eat mindfully, we direct our attention to each sensation that occurs while eating, such as chewing, tasting, savouring, and swallowing. Mindful eating will help you become more aware of your body's natural fullness cues (i.e. when you have consumed enough food and should stop eating), which will help you eat less and lose weight. Let's do an exercise to practice mindful eating.

Mindful eating exercise (low carb chocolate)

This exercise is an exaggeration of mindful eating. By being fully aware of what you are eating, and how it feels to eat, you will make better eating decisions, know exactly when to stop eating, and will be more satisfied with your meal in general. *Eating mindfully is about enjoying the **entire eating experience**. Draw parallels to high-end restaurants, where their emphasis is not on large meals, but rather on meals that are full of flavor, color, and texture (i.e. quality vs. quantity).*

The purpose of this activity is to exaggerate the act of tasting and eating by having you **slow down** and **focus on all of the sensations** associated with eating this piece of chocolate. *Give the patient 1 piece of low-carb chocolate.* The goal is to mindfully eat this piece of chocolate.

Before putting the chocolate in your mouth, take some time to examine it. Make a mental note of what it smells like, looks like, and feels like. When you are ready, put the chocolate into your mouth. Do not chew it right away. Instead, notice how it feels on your tongue. How does the chocolate taste? What is its texture? When you are ready, start chewing. Focus on the act of chewing. What does it feel like to chew the chocolate? Does its texture and taste change as you continue to chew it? When you are ready, swallow the piece of chocolate. Notice how this feels. Finally, when you have finished swallowing, be mindful of no longer feeling the sensation of chocolate in your mouth. *You can participate in this exercise with the patient if you wish.*

Do you have any questions? *Make sure that you re-emphasize that this is an **exaggeration of mindful eating**. Patients are not expected to take 60 seconds in their everyday life to eat one mouthful of food.*

Homework

This week, I want you to practice mindful eating. **I want you to eat one meal or snack mindfully per day.** Just like today's exercise, I want you to slow down and to eat with all of your senses. Do not eat when you are distracted (e.g. watching television, working on the computer, etc.). Pay close attention to the smell, taste, and texture of your food. To help you slow your eating down, I want you to use an exercise called: **Stop-Bite-Breath**: That is, before eating a meal or snack, take a moment to **Stop**: Examine your food; what does it look like? What does it smell like? Then, take a **Bite**: Pay close attention to the food's taste and texture. Finally, after swallowing your mouthful of food, take one deep **Breath** and savor the experience. Continue this sequence of stopping-biting-and-breathing until you have completed your entire snack or meal. By slowing down and being fully aware of what you are eating, you will have time to make better eating decisions and thus will be more satisfied with your meal/snack. When we eat mindfully, we tend to eat less high calorie foods because we have time to weigh the pros and cons of what we are eating. Every time that you eat something, especially high calorie or "bad" foods, ask yourself whether or not it is worth it; does the pleasure you are getting out of it warrant its calories, sugar or fat intake? Most of the time "bad foods" don't. When one takes the time to become fully aware of what they are eating, especially when eating "bad" foods, one tends to enjoy these "bad foods" less, or even dislike them.

Note again that the patient does not need to spend 60 seconds savoring each bite. The purpose of Stop-Bite-and Breath is to get the patient to slow down and to become consciously aware of what they are doing and eating.

Describe your experience of mindful eating in this session's handout. How does mindful eating differ from mindless eating? Did the taste and pleasure of your food warrant its calories, sugar or fat intake?

Session 3: Emotional Eating

Objective: *Discuss emotional eating. What emotions lead the patient to overeat?*

Homework: *Use STOP to help reduce emotional eating.*

****Please Complete the Physician/Patient Check-In Form before proceeding with the session****

Emotional Eating

Emotions, like stress, anxiety, and boredom can make us want to eat even though we are not **physically hungry**. This is called emotional eating. Emotional eating can lead to weight gain and can make it harder to lose weight because it makes you eat more than your body needs (i.e., **you are eating even though your body is not physically hungry**). When you feel the urge to eat, it is important to immediately step on the brakes and ask yourself, “what is driving this urge?” Is your urge to eat driven by physical hunger, or is it driven by emotional hunger (e.g., stress, boredom, sadness, etc.)? **If you realize why you are hungry and choose to eat only when you are physically hungry, you will eat less, and you will lose weight.** *Before continuing, ask the patient if they are an emotional eater. If they are not, skip the following step and immediately introduce the STOP technique. If the patient is an emotional eater, quickly brainstorm and identify the specific emotions that cause the patient to want to eat (e.g., stress, boredom, anxiety, etc.). If the patient is having difficulties identifying specific emotions that trigger their urge to eat, work backwards and get them to describe certain situations where this urge to eat usually occurs (e.g., in front of a television, after a stressful meeting, etc.). Ask them to describe the physical sensations they feel when they get this urge to eat. Sometimes people are unaware of their emotions, so it can be helpful to tie these emotions to physical symptoms. For example, tension in the neck and shoulders, a racing heart, a feeling of emptiness etc. that makes them want to eat.*

Introduce the STOP technique

To help you slow down enough to figure out whether your urge to eat is emotional or real hunger, I am going to teach you a technique called **STOP**. *If the patient is not an emotional eater, emphasize that STOP can be used whenever they experience an urge to eat.* Every time that you experience an urge to eat, I want you to apply this technique **before acting on this urge**. This technique will help **slow you down** and will put some distance between you and your emotions. By doing this, you will be less likely to automatically eat when you are not really physically hungry. *(Be sure to emphasize to use STOP BEFORE eating because it helps SLOW YOU DOWN)*

STOP stands for:

- ♣ **S**– Stop! Do not immediately act on your urge to eat.
- ♣ **T**–Take a breath— Slow down!
- ♣ **O**- Observe—Look inwards. Listen to your body. How are you feeling? Is this urge to eat physical or emotional? Are you feeling bored, tense, or sad perhaps?
- ♣ **P**– Proceed. Decide to eat or not to eat based on your observations. **If you are physically hungry, eat. If you are emotionally hungry, do not eat;** instead, take the time to really understand your emotions. Ask yourself what you are feeling and why? If you are feeling **depressed** and **lonely**, call or message someone who always makes you feel better. If you are feeling **anxious**, expand your nervous energy by dancing to your favorite song, squeezing a stress ball, or going for a walk. If you are feeling **exhausted**, consider taking a bath or relaxing with a cup of tea. If you are feeling **bored**, read a book, watch your favorite television show, or turn to an activity you enjoy.

Homework

This week, I want you to practice using STOP whenever you feel the urge to eat. When you use STOP, please go through the checklist on this session's handout and make sure that you are using all four steps correctly (**S**top, **T**ake a breath, **O**bserve, and **P**roceed). We will be using STOP throughout the program. It is a crucial tool in reducing overeating. The more you practice STOP, the easier and more effective it will become.

Session 4: Identifying hunger cues

Objective: *Explain and clarify the difference between physical hunger and psychological hunger. Identify and clarify the patients physical hunger cues.*

Homework: *Practice only eating when physically hungry. Before deciding to eat, rate physical hunger using the hunger and fullness scale reviewed in-session.*

Briefly review session 3 homework. Did the patients observe any changes in their eating patterns after using STOP? Did it help reduce their automatic eating? Trouble-shoot where problems arose.

****Please Complete the Physician/Patient Check-In Form before proceeding with the session****

Physical hunger (true hunger) vs. psychological hunger

There are many times in the day when our urge to eat is not caused by a physical need to eat, but is instead caused by certain situations or emotions. *Briefly ask patients to identify and describe some of these emotions or situations.* Last session, we reviewed emotional eating which is a specific type of psychological hunger. Psychological hunger differs from true, physical hunger because our desire to eat is **unsupported by any physical proof that our body requires food** (e.g., feeling hunger pangs). When we are psychologically hungry, we eat for a variety of reasons; like being bored, having food in front of us, socializing with friends and family, or simply because eating is “fun.” In order to lose weight, it is **important that you learn to recognize and distinguish true hunger from psychological hunger**. *Quickly brainstorm and identify the specific physical cues or body sensations that the patient uses to determine **their physical (true) hunger**. If the patient is having difficulties identifying these cues, you can help by providing some examples: physical hunger develops gradually; it is accompanied by a growling or an empty feeling in the stomach. Sometimes its feeling is less localised in the stomach region and is a more general sensation in the abdomen, especially the upper abdomen. Low energy, headaches and a feeling of moodiness can be signs of extreme hunger. Psychological hunger does not have these physical signals.*

Rating physical hunger

Every time that you have an urge to eat, ask yourself: Is my body really hungry? Rate your level of hunger on a scale from 1 (*starving; feeling weak, dizzy*) to 10 (*stuffed; so full you feel sick*). To help you, use the scale provided on this session's handout. **When you rate your level of physical hunger, be sure to check-in with your body signals and listen to your true hunger cues.** Does your stomach feel empty, is it growling? Did your urge to eat develop gradually or was it sudden?

Emotional hunger generally develops very quickly, often immediately after experiencing a specific emotion or emotional situation. If a patient experiences an abrupt, almost urgent need to eat, it is very likely that this urge is driven by emotions rather than true, physiological hunger. Postpone eating if your true hunger score is a 4 or higher. Your body does not need food at this moment in time.

Homework

This week, I want you to practice **only eating when physically hungry, i.e. when rating your hunger at 3 or lower.** Whenever you experience an urge to eat, I want you to apply STOP. Remember, STOP is a technique that will help **slow you down.** By slowing down, you will be better able identify and distinguish whether your urge to eat is physical or psychological.

Let's quickly review STOP and integrate what we discussed in today's session.

- ❖ **S** – Stop! Do not immediately act on your urge to eat.
- ❖ **T** – Take a breath— Slow down!
- ❖ **O** - Observe—Look inwards. Listen to your body signals.
 - How are you currently feeling? Are you bored, tense, or sad perhaps?
 - Do you feel any of your physical hunger cues (i.e. is your stomach growling, does it feel empty)? If yes, rate your current level of hunger from 1 (*starving; feeling weak, dizzy*) to 10 (*so full you feel sick*).
- ❖ **P** – Proceed. Decide whether or not to eat based on your observations. If you are physically hungry and have scored below a 4, eat. If you are psychologically hungry, or have scored above a 4, do not eat.

When rating your hunger, use the scale provided on this session's handout. Describe your experience. Note how your level of hunger varies throughout the day.

Session 5: Identifying fullness cues

Objective: *Discuss and clarify the physical sensations of fullness.*

Homework: *Stop eating when “comfortably satisfied.” During a meal, rate your level of hunger using the hunger and fullness scale.*

****Please Complete the Physician/Patient Check-In Form before proceeding with the session****

Fullness Cues

While learning to recognize and distinguish when to eat and when not to eat (true hunger vs. psychological hunger) is important, it is equally important to learn **when to stop eating before eating too much (i.e. when your body has eaten enough food and is satisfied).** Often when we eat, we overeat. This tendency to overeat happens when we do not listen to our stomach's signals. When we do not listen to these signals, we do not realize when we have eaten enough. Over time,

after years of not listening to our stomach cues, a discrepancy develops between what we *think* it feels like, and what it *actually* feels like to have eaten enough. To get rid of this discrepancy, it is important to turn your awareness inwards and tune into your stomach signals. By doing this, you will reconnect with your body's signals of having eaten enough. We have eaten enough when we feel "comfortably satisfied" rather than "full". *Ask patients to describe their body's physical sensations of fullness. Most patients will likely describe a feeling of pressure or discomfort in their belly, a feeling of stuffedness or being weighed down. They may describe their stomach as being bloated, distended, or inflated like a balloon. They may also describe feeling tired, lethargic, or sluggish after eating. Explain that these sensations all indicate that they have overeaten. True stomach satiety, or "comfortable satisfaction" is a different type of sensation; it is a feeling that is more subtle or subdued.*

When your stomach is truly satisfied, a light, almost gentle pressure will appear in your abdomen. It is at this point in your meal when you should stop eating. Although you could eat more, you choose not to because your body is no longer physically hungry. Initially, this new feeling of stomach satisfaction may be hard to recognize. Don't worry, this is normal. To help you start recognizing this sensation, I would like you to perform a belly scan whenever you eat. As you are eating, focus on your stomach's physical sensations. Imagine that your stomach is a fuel tank, and that your awareness is the fuel gauge. At the start of your meal, you may feel that your stomach is empty or hallow. As you continue to eat, this empty sensation will be slowly replaced by a gentle pressure. **Stop eating once you feel this gentle pressure.** This is your body's fuel gauge telling you that it is "comfortably satisfied" and that its tank is full! At this point in your meal, you should still feel light and energetic, not tired or lethargic. If you feel stuffed, or uncomfortably full, you have overeaten.

Homework

This week, I want to you to practice recognizing and identifying the feelings in your stomach when you eat and after you ate. Before taking a bite of food, rank your hunger on a scale from 1 to 10. Use the hunger and fullness scale we reviewed last session. **Make sure to stop eating when you feel comfortably satisfied.** *Emphasize that our body's physical hunger and fullness cues are on a continuum; this feeling of fullness, or "comfortably satisfied" is mid-way between extreme hunger (starving; feeling weak, dizzy) and extreme fullness (so full you feel sick).* As you eat, use the eating belly scan to help you recognize this feeling of stomach satisfaction. **Pay special attention to how your stomach feels after every bite of food.** Notice how the empty sensation in your stomach is slowly replaced by a gentle pressure. Remember to **stop eating once you feel this gentle pressure, even if food is still left on your plate.** When practicing identifying these fullness cues, use **Stop-Bite-Breath** (*From your session 2 handout*). This exercise will help slow you down between bites, making it easier to recognize when you should stop eating.

Session 6: Mindful Awareness of Food Choices and Portion Size

Objective: *Learning the importance of being aware of daily food choices and portion sizes.*

Homework: *Moderate your daily portion sizes and carb intake using the three tips reviewed in session.*

****Please Complete the Physician/Patient Check-In Form before proceeding with the session****

Up to this point, we have been focusing on the importance of tuning in and listening to our body signals as a way to lose weight. Now you are ready to start paying attention to and becoming aware of HOW MUCH you eat. This increased awareness will help you eat less and lose weight.

Everything that we eat and drink contains calories; some more than others. When we overeat, even the right types of foods, we take in more calories than our body can “burn.” It is these extra calories that result in weight gain. To lose weight and to keep it off in the long run, it is important that you become mindfully aware of your portion sizes, that is, how much you are eating at each meal or snack. When we eat, we tend to overeat because our portion sizes are too large. Effectively managing your portions is therefore an important factor in successful weight loss. Today, we’re going to review 3 tips that will help you eat less by decreasing your portion sizes, while still leaving you feeling satisfied throughout the day.

1) The Power of a Smaller Plate

Studies have shown that eating from a smaller plate tricks our brain into believing that we are consuming more food than what we actually are. When we eat from a large dinner plate, we tend to eat more because our portions always appear much smaller. **To help you lose weight, use a small plate (like a dessert plate) for your meal.** This reduction in plate size will help you eat less while still feeling satisfied. *Ask the patient if they can imagine themselves using a dessert plate in their home instead of a regular plate. Explain that if a family member makes a comment regarding this change in plate size, they will only comment 1 or 2 times. After that, it will no longer be an issue.*

This same principal can also be applied to drinking beverages in the case that you have to drink beverages that contain calories (water is best!). When drinking a beverage other than water, always choose a tall, slender glass instead of a large wide one. This will help you drink less, while still feeling satisfied!

2) Moderate your carbohydrates

Although many of us love to eat foods that are rich in carbohydrates, like bread, pasta and sweets, these types of foods are **extremely high in calories** and can prevent weight loss when overeaten. They also spark insulin levels, which contributes to weight gain. It is therefore **very important to minimize your daily carb intake when losing weight.** Here’s some simple ways to do this:

- Trade your breakfast carbs (e.g. cereal or bread) for high protein alternatives like low-fat cheese or a boiled egg. These lean proteins will fill you up and will help keep you going until lunch!
- When plating your meal, double up on your vegetables! Reduce your carbs (e.g. potatoes, pasta, rice) to a ½ a cup.
- Avoid sugary drinks (juices, sodas, sweetened ice tea, etc.). Drink water instead!

3) Eat a soup or salad before your meal

Try eating a green leaf salad or low-calorie soup before your main course; this will help fill you up! Studies have shown that people who eat a healthy appetizer before their main course, tend to eat smaller portions at their main meal and are more satisfied in general. *Emphasize that **the soup must be broth-based and not high in cream**. Also, emphasize that patients should choose their salad dressing wisely and use it sparingly. Adding the wrong toppings to a salad (e.g. any cream-based dressing, like ranch, blue cheese, Caesar, thousand island, etc.) can double, or even triple the calorie count!*

Homework

This week, I want you to become mindfully aware of your portion sizes. Eating smaller portions is crucial for weight loss. To help you get started, use the three tips reviewed in session (e.g. using a smaller plate, decreasing your carb intake, and choosing to eat a low-calorie soup or salad before your main course). To help you remember, use the check list provided in your session handout. Which technique did you find most helpful and why?

Session 7: Mindful awareness of meal frequency

Objective: *Discuss the importance of meal frequency.*

Homework: *Practice eating 3 small meals and 2 snacks per day.*

****Please Complete the Physician/Patient Check-In Form before proceeding with the session****

Last session, we discussed the importance of increasing your awareness of daily food choices and portion sizes as a way to lose weight. *Quickly ask participants how their week went eating wise. Were they able to decrease their portion sizes using the 3 techniques you reviewed last session? Which technique(s) worked best for them?* This week, we are going to turn our attention to the importance of increasing your awareness of meal frequency. **A regular pattern of meals and snacks is important for weight loss.** One way to prevent overeating is to spread your calories throughout the day so that you eat every few hours. This will help keep your hunger in-check in between meals and prevent insulin spikes that lead to weight gain. Rather than eating 3 large meals per day, eat 3 small meals and 2 snacks instead. This will help you sustain a healthy blood sugar level and will prevent weight gain. By spreading your meals throughout the day, you will be more in control of your hunger and will be less likely to overeat. *Ask participants to describe their current eating patterns. How many meals and snacks do they eat per day?*

Homework

This week, I want you to be mindfully aware of your daily meal frequency. **Aim to eat 3 small meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) per day with a snack in between each meal. Remember that these 5 meals/snacks need to be small!** If they are not, you will gain weight. To help you reduce your portion sizes, **eat only half of what you would normally eat at any given meal or snack.** Whenever you eat a meal or snack, make a note of it on your session handout. As you start to distribute your small meals and snacks equally throughout the day, use the belly scan, reviewed in session 1, to tune into your stomach's natural hunger and fullness cues. How does changing your

meal frequency affect your hunger? Do you find that you are less physically hungry when you spread your meals throughout the day?

Session 8: Establishing Habits

Objective: *Review the skills taught throughout the program to help reduce overeating and promote long term weight loss.*

Homework: *Identifying which exercises or techniques worked best.*

****Please Complete the Physician/Patient Check-In Form before proceeding with the session****

All of the homework that has been given up to this point will be most effective if it is practiced regularly such that it becomes **a habit**. Decreasing the tendency to overeat and improving weight extends beyond this program. The skills that you have learned here can be used indefinitely. There is no quick fix, or easy solution to weight loss. Since weight loss takes time and effort, it is important that you focus on applying these skills consistently over the long term. This way, these skills will continue to help you eat less and lose weight.

Let's quickly review some of the skills that we covered over the past several weeks. First, we discussed the **belly scan exercise**. I asked you to routinely practice this belly scan as an exercise to help you begin tuning into your stomach signals. We then reviewed mindful eating and I taught you the importance of slowing down and being consciously aware of our entire eating experience. In session 3 we reviewed **STOP** (Stop-Take a breath-Observe-Proceed) to help reduce automatic eating and to help you decide whether your urge to eat is a psychological or physical urge. In sessions 4 and 5, we discussed the importance of tuning-in and listening to our body's physical cues of hunger and fullness. Again, I emphasized the importance of slowing down when eating in order to recognize and identify these subtle shifts in your body signals. An **eating belly scan** was introduced to help you do this. In session 6 we discussed portion sizes, specifically, the importance of paying attention to **HOW MUCH** you eat. Because eating smaller portions is so crucial for weight loss, we reviewed three techniques to help you do just that. These techniques included: using a **dessert plate** when dishing your meal, **decreasing your daily carb intake**, and **choosing to eat a low-calorie soup or salad before your main course**. In session 7, we discussed the importance of increasing your awareness of meal frequency as a way to prevent insulin spikes that lead to weight gain. Rather than eating 3 large meals per day, we asked you to **eat 3 small meals and 2 snacks** instead. To help you continue to reduce your portion sizes, I asked you to **only eat half of what you would normally eat at any given meal or snack**.

Out of the techniques we reviewed, which techniques worked best for you? *Encourage the patients to continue practicing these techniques, especially the techniques that they identified as being effective. Be sure to emphasize that although some techniques may seem more effective than others, all of the techniques reviewed in the program work together. You cannot have one technique without the other. To lose weight and eat less, it is always important to choose the right combinations of foods, in the right amount, in response to their body's natural hunger and fullness cues.*

Like I previously said, the techniques reviewed in this program are skills that you can use for the rest of your life. With consistent practice, these skills will become easier and more automatic, until at one point, you may no longer realize that you are using them.

Homework

Encourage the patient to revisit their homework sheets from previous sessions and to identify which techniques are most effective in managing their tendency to overeat. Every session, we discussed a specific technique or exercise to help you begin tuning in and listening to your body's physical cues of hunger and fullness. Now that you are more familiar with these techniques, I want you to review your homework sheets and choose the ones that worked best for you. When you have done this, write these techniques down on *this session's handout*. We will review these techniques again next week so that you can continue to use them in the future.

Session 9: Commitment to Values

Objective: *Discuss setbacks, loss of motivation, and ways to stay committed to weight loss by not overeating.*

Homework: *Make a summary card with patient in-session.*

****Please Complete the Physician/Patient Check-In Form before proceeding with the session****

Setbacks and loss of motivation are normal. They happen to everyone and are an inevitable part of weight loss. In a way, weight loss is like hiking a mountain. For a while, it feels like the hike is never going to end and there is no way that you will make it to the top. But once you get out of the trees, you can see a clear path to the summit and know that you are going in the right direction. Success is not only about the final outcome (in this case, making it to the top of the mountain). You can also achieve success along the way. It's like the old saying, "it's not about the destination, it's about the journey." Weight loss won't always be easy, or smooth, but that doesn't mean that one cannot achieve their eventual goal if they set their mind to it.

Losing weight is about progress and not perfection. Immediate results do not exist. True weight loss takes time and effort. In order to stay motivated and on the right track, it is important to identify and celebrate every bit of progress that you have made thus far. *Brainstorm and identify this progress with the patient. What changes are they most proud of? Even the smallest of changes (e.g. drinking water instead of juice at dinner time) should be praised.* When you catch yourself being critical or judgmental towards yourself, always remember that changing old habits and losing weight is a process. It doesn't happen overnight. Dwelling on negative thoughts only hinders this process (e.g. "I cheated", "I'm a pig", "I'm such a failure"). Instead, focus on the positives (e.g. "I stopped eating when I felt comfortably satisfied," "I only ate when I was truly hungry", "I didn't eat that cupcake that my colleague offered me at lunch"). Remember, no one is ever perfect, so every bit of progress is a step in the right direction!

Setbacks

*Briefly discuss any setbacks that patients have had, or think that they think might have, in regards to their weight and tendency to overeat. Depending on their answers, remind the patients of the various strategies learnt in session (belly scan, STOP, Stop-Bite-Breath, rating hunger and fullness cues, belly scan while eating etc.) to help manage their overeating. **Overall, it is important to emphasize that setbacks are normal and are an inevitable part of losing weight. The key to success is how one reacts to these inevitable setbacks or slips.** Patients must understand that it is important to react proactively when setbacks occur in order to prevent more slips from happening in the future. When the patient experiences a slip, they should use the skills that they learnt in the program to help them get back on track.*

Ways to stay committed

When you feel your motivation slipping, it always helps to remember the goals and values that initially led you to want to lose weight and then to use the skills and techniques that you learnt in this program to stay true to these objectives. *Briefly brainstorm these goals and values with the patient (i.e. Why do they want to lose weight? Why is weight loss so important to them?). Make sure to emphasize values related to health (e.g., lowering blood pressure, risk of heart disease, risk of diabetes, etc.), especially the health concerns that led to them to participate in this program.*

Once the patient has identified their reasons for losing weight and why this is important to them, discuss how this relates to overeating. Ask questions like:

- How is overeating related to your weight loss?
- Does it help or hinder your progress?
- Is overeating in line with your weight loss values, or not? Why?

Homework (done in-session)

This week, as we as we finish off, I want you to write these specific weight loss values and goals on a summary card (*See session handout. Get the patients to write down their key goals and values on this summary card*). Refer back to this card when you are feeling a lack of motivation, or have experienced a setback. This summary card will help you stay on track by reminding you why you want to lose weight, and why overeating is inconsistent with your weight loss values. Throughout the program, you have learnt skills to help you stick to your values of eating less to lose weight. In order to stay true to these values, you can use the techniques that you chose as being most effective in managing your tendency to overeat. Keep this card where you can see it, so that it acts as a constant reminder of your values to reduce your overeating and to lose weight. When a setback occurs, refer back to this summary card and use it as a source of motivation to keep heading towards your values of losing weight and eating less.

Sources

The rationales and supporting empirical evidence for justifying the program decisions are provided below:

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