

Week 2: Hunger & Fullness

The Drive to Eat

Food is essential to our survival.
We have a biological drive to eat.
Hunger is normal.

Denying Hunger

Disconnects us from our body's true needs.
Causes hunger signals to fade.
Lowers your body's energy requirements.
Reinforces belief we can't trust ourselves around food.

Lost the Signal?

Many factors can interfere with our hunger signals:

- dieting
- chaos
- skipping breakfast
- stress
- lack of self-care

How to Honor Hunger

Begin to listen for it and learn to recognize the signals.
Eat regularly and don't get overly hungry.
Tune in to the direct experience of your body.
Be patient and don't panic.

Feeling Your Fullness

It can be hard to recognize comfortable fullness. Reasons include:

- history of dieting
- mindless or emotional eating
- eating when overly hungry
- being taught to clean your plate
- respecting the economics and value of food
- experience with food insecurity

How Fullness Works

The brain and digestive system communicate to regulate fullness. When you eat, nerve receptors in your stomach send signals to the brain that you are starting to feel full.
This feedback loop takes time. It can take 20 to 30 minutes to feel your fullness.

Unconditional Permission

The ability to respect your fullness requires giving yourself unconditional permission to eat. How can you stop eating in response to fullness when you believe you won't be able to eat that food or meal again?

How to Feel Your Fullness

Conscious-Awareness Eating: a neutral awareness of your eating

1. Pause in the middle of a meal or snack for a time-out.
2. Check in with your body and taste buds.
 - TASTE CHECK: How does this food taste?
 - SATIETY CHECK: Is my hunger going away? Am I starting to feel full? Keep eating if you are still hungry.
3. When you finish eating, assess your fullness level.
 - How would you describe your fullness?
 - Did you reach comfortable fullness? Did you surpass it?
4. Assessing your fullness will help you identify your "last few bites threshold."
 - You have a growing realization that you are just a few bites away from fullness, and can recognize the last bite.
 - This can take time to learn. Be patient with yourself.
 - Do not feel obligated to leave food on your plate.
 - Do not feel guilty if you decide to eat past the point of comfortable fullness.

Hunger & Fullness Scale

Our mind and body function best when we stay within the 3 to 7 range. Respond to your hunger and fullness cues before reaching extreme hunger or extreme fullness. When we wait too long to listen to our body's signals (1 and 2 on the scale), this can leave us feeling out of control and more likely to eat past the point of fullness (8 to 10 on the scale).

0	Painfully hungry. This is primal hunger, which is very intense and urgent.
1	Ravenous and irritable. Anxious to eat.
2	Very hungry. Looking forward to a hearty meal or snack.
3	Hungry and ready to eat, but without urgency. It's a polite hunger.
4	Subtly hungry, slightly empty.
5	Neutral. Neither hungry nor full.
6	Beginning to feel emerging fullness.
7	Comfortable fullness. You feel satisfied and content.
8	A little too full. This doesn't feel pleasant, but not yet an unpleasant experience.
9	Very full, too full. You feel uncomfortable; need to unbutton pants or remove belt.
10	Painfully full, stuffed. You may feel nauseous.

© Tribole & Resch (2017). The Intuitive Eating Workbook: Ten Principles for Nourishing a Healthy Relationship with Food (A New Harbinger Self-Help Workbook), p. 49. <https://amzn.to/2DaE5IG>