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## Eating style

### Goal Supporting vs. Goal Thwarting Eating Styles

Most people have trouble believing there is no such thing as a “bad” food; only “bad” diets if too many fat-and sugar-filled foods are selected. It seems many people, especially those trying to lose weight, constantly rate their behavior throughout the day as good or bad depending on what they eat. They consider themselves “good” when they choose “nutritious” foods or eat appropriate portions. Conversely, they describe themselves as “bad” or “a failure” if they feel they have made inappropriate food choices. A key goal of the OPTIFAST® Program is to help people change their eating style to maintain a healthy weight longterm.

You can have your cake (occasionally) and maintain a healthy weight if you learn how to eat appropriately. Many people find it easier to identify appropriate and inappropriate eating if they think in terms of goal supporting vs goal thwarting eating habits.

#### 5 P’s of Appropriate (goal supporting) Eating

**Planned** — According to researchers coordinating the National Weight Control Registry, over 80% of successful weight managers reported planning their food intake ahead of time helped them break the loss/regain diet cycle.

**Portion Controlled** — Whether you overindulge in sweets and snacks or eat too much of a healthy meal, eating more calories than you burn piles on the pounds. Limiting portion sizes is a great way to control calories and make room for occasional treats.

**Proportionate** — Balanced nutrition is the key to good health. Food pyramids emphasize creating a nutritionally balanced diet by eating the right amount of foods from the different food groups. Is your diet well proportioned?

**Proper Place** — Make rules about where you will allow yourself to eat and stick to them. A good place to start is to make the rule that you must serve yourself a reasonable portion of whatever food you are going to eat, then sit down in a specified place to eat it. This cuts down on

## tools for success

- Distinguish between inappropriate and appropriate eating.
- Identify your personal eating style.
- Determine how and why aspects of your eating style are inappropriate.
- Change inappropriate eating styles into appropriate eating styles.

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grazing and binging. Some helpful rules include: no eating while standing, at your desk, while watching TV, or in bed. Restrict yourself to eating at dining tables and your breakfast bar. If eating on the run is the only way you get breakfast, restrict breakfast food choices to healthy options like OPTIFAST 800® Ready To Drink or Bars.

**Peaceful** — It's important to learn to "sit and savor" to feel more satisfied by smaller portions of food. When you eat on the run or simultaneously talking on the phone, watching TV, working, etc., it is easy to lose track of the calories you consume. Furthermore, you may feel dissatisfied because you never really concentrated on the food. Sitting and savoring allows you to enjoy the food you are eating and gives your body's natural calorie counter the time it needs to kick into action. Remember it takes about 20 minutes for your brain to get the message you have eaten and turn off your food seeking drive.

Inappropriate eating occurs for a number of reasons. When people eat inappropriately they often end up feeling upset and can become very self-critical.

### 5 G's of Inappropriate (goal thwarting) Eating

**Grazing** — This eat-all-day style has several pitfalls. It is unplanned so it usually takes place in the wrong setting, and it is hard to control calorie intake, and nutritional balance. It also prevents you from tuning into body's hunger cues.

**Grabbing and Going** — As the name implies "grab and go" eating usually takes place in the wrong setting and typically involves eating too fast, or without any sense of the food being consumed.

**Gulping** — Whatever the setting, eating too fast piles on the calories and eliminates the enjoyment you get from savoring each bite. Lack of enjoyment can send you back to the kitchen. Put your fork—or in the case of something like a burrito, the food itself—down between bites.

**Gorging** — Exceeds your daily calorie limit.

**Goodies** — Making sweets and treats the mainstay of your diet is a recipe for weight gain. Described by health experts as "empty calories," typically these foods supply sugar and fat but little else. This eating style can leave you overloaded on calories and lacking in essential nutrients.

### All Foods Can Fit — Really

You will become more comfortable separating goal supporting and goal thwarting eating with time. One of the most important things you'll learn in this program is to identify inappropriate eating and to take steps to make it appropriate. Let's look at some examples of different eating situations:

**Example** — You pass a fast food restaurant after shopping and decide you want a hamburger and a soda. You had lunch an hour earlier, but you buy the burger and soda anyway.

This is inappropriate eating. It is unplanned, it is not in response to hunger, and it is probably not in your daily meal plan.

**Example** — You are shopping and decide it is time for lunch. There is a fast food restaurant nearby that has great food. You decide to have a hamburger and diet soda for lunch. You finish off your lunch with the apple you put in your purse earlier in the day.

This is appropriate eating. You planned for and have calories available for lunch. You chose a single burger without mayonnaise or cheese and ordered a diet soda instead of a regular soda. The apple added some fiber and nutrients to round out the meal.

These two examples illustrate essentially the same food can be eaten in a way that supports or thwarts your goals. It is all in the planning.



## Eating Style Self-assessment

Eating styles are usually the result of knowledge about food and eating, personal food history, food management skills, and responses to different eating cues.

As you gradually return to self-prepared foods, it is important for you to identify your primary eating style. This self-assessment will help you determine your eating style. Reference the corresponding pages to discover ways to improve your approach to food.

**Scoring** — Indicate the degree to which the statements describe you:

- 1** = Does not describe me at all
- 2** = Describes me a little
- 3** = Describes me fairly well
- 4** = Describes me exactly

Score	Section 1 — Emotional Eater
	I overeat when I'm feeling stressed or anxious.
	I overeat when I'm feeling angry.
	I overeat when I'm feeling depressed.
	I overeat when I'm feeling bored.
	I overeat when I'm feeling good or celebrating.
	<b>Total Score</b>

If you scored:

5-9: Emotional eating is not a problem for you.

10-15: Emotions are sometimes the reason you overeat. Identify which emotion(s) gives you the most difficulty and develop action plans for coping better with the emotion.

16-20: Your eating is frequently governed by your emotions. You need to discover the root of your emotions and decide on ways to deal with them other than by eating.

Score	Section 2 — Eating Skills
	When eating with others, I'm the first to finish my meal.
	I tend to nibble when preparing or cleaning up after a meal.
	I regularly have second helpings of foods I enjoy.
	I eat in places other than the kitchen or dining room.
	I tend to clean my entire plate even when I'm full.
	<b>Total Score</b>

If you scored:

5-9: Your eating skills are generally appropriate. However, you should pay special attention to any behavior on which you scored 3 or more.

10-14: You have developed some unhealthy habits. Identify one or two behaviors on which you scored 3 or more and make plans to replace these behaviors with more appropriate skills.

15-20: You need to change a number of your current eating behaviors. Start by choosing one or two behaviors on which you scored 3 or more. Identify ways you can stop the behavior. Once you have practiced your new skills for several weeks, pick another behavior you can change.

Score	Section 3 — Social Influences
	I tend to eat more when I'm with certain people.
	Many of my friends or family members like to eat.
	I attend a lot of social events (parties, dinners, meetings, athletic events, etc.) at which food is served.
	My work requires that I eat many meals away from home.
	At a social events, I have a hard time controlling my eating.
	<b>Total Score</b>

If you scored:

5-9: You may have occasional situations when people, places, or events influence your eating, but generally it does not appear that social influences are a problem for you.

10-14: It seems you have some social pressures that make it difficult for you to control your eating. Identify with whom, where, or when social pressures make sticking to your eating plans difficult. Then devise strategies for coping with the pressures.

15-20: Your family, friends, and/or work are a problem for you when it comes to controlling your eating. Tell friends or family how they can be supportive of your new healthful eating habits. Identify coping strategies for eating out at parties or for work.

Score	Section 4 — Social Influences
	I get urges to eat, even when I am not physically hungry.
	I have a very hard time controlling urges.
	I regularly skip at least one meal a day to lower calories.
	I'm sometimes afraid I won't be able to stop eating voluntarily.
	When I feel I've eaten too much, I will often fast, exercise excessively, vomit, or use a laxative.
	<b>Total Score</b>

If you scored:

5-9: You do not seem to have a problem with restrained eating.

10-14: You show a tendency toward inappropriate behaviors related to restrained eating.

15-20: You seem to have a problem with restrained eating. You need to examine very closely how you cope with restrained eating. If you feel you cannot change the items on which you scored 3 or more by yourself, you may need to work closely with a skilled counselor.



## The Emotional Eater

By themselves, emotions can be internal cues to eat inappropriately. Many people learn to use food as a “treat” to make themselves feel less frustrated, bored, or depressed. Some people use food as a “security blanket” for times when they are feeling lonely, anxious, or angry.

If you eat as a way to cope with emotions, you need to find other, non-food ways of dealing with these emotions. A list of common emotions is presented below. Think of the ways you currently cope with each emotion. Brainstorm other coping activities you can substitute for eating.

Emotion	Current coping method	Future coping method
Anger		
Depression		
Boredom		
Anxiety		
Frustration		
Happiness		
Nervousness		
Other		

What you think or say to yourself can affect your mood. Learning to manage your weight often comes with a mental yardstick or mental goal. When you fall short of the goal, you may become upset (negative emotion), give up control of your eating, and consequently eat inappropriately.

**Avoiding Automatic Thoughts and Self-Defeating Statements** — When you do not meet your goals, you will most likely feel disappointed. The way you handle your disappointment can determine whether or not you eat inappropriately. Irrational, automatic thoughts often lead to inappropriate eating. Here’s how:

All-or-nothing thinking (also known as black or white) refers to a person’s evaluation of himself or herself as a success or failure, with no gradations of success in between. For example, you might think a two-pound weight loss is a success, but a half-pound weight gain is a total failure. Success is a matter of degree, not absolutes.

Finding failure refers to the tendency of people who are trying to watch their weight to focus on their failures, while totally disregarding their successes. Remember, the successes are often more important than the failures.

Doomsaying refers to the tendency of people who are watching their weight to think because they made a mistake on one occasion, they are doomed to repeat this mistake over and over. In short, doomsayers feel there is little hope they can change their behaviors.

Instead of giving in to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, examine your inappropriate eating episodes and determine the problems you are having. New solutions come only after you have identified the old problems. Then, take steps to handle those problems differently. In addition, don’t expect perfection the next time the problem appears.

Situations in which I usually eat appropriately:

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Situations in which I usually eat inappropriately:

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## The Unskilled Eater

As you return to self-prepared foods, you can start practicing some behavioral skills that promote long-term weight management. If any of the following behaviors apply to you, try some of the suggested techniques to improve your eating skills.

**Eating Too Fast** — Learn to eat more slowly. When you eat slowly, six important things happen:

- You taste and enjoy food more.
- You give yourself more time to feel full from the food you have eaten.
- You eat less because you feel full earlier.
- You lose weight because you eat less.
- You experience a greater sense of control.
- You have more time to think about how much food you want to eat, before you have eaten all of it.

Some techniques you can use to slow your eating are:

- Put your fork or spoon down between bites.
- Divide or cut your food into small bites. Eat only one bite at a time.
- Increase the number of times you chew something before swallowing.
- Pause in the middle of meals or between courses.

**Nibbling While Cooking and/or Cleaning Up** — The sight and smell of food are powerful cues. As you gradually add more self-prepared foods to your meal plan, the following skills can help you control the amount you eat.

- Don't eat while standing. Sitting down will make you more aware of what you are eating and help you enjoy it more.
- Chew sugarless gum while cooking, cleaning up or when tempted to eat inappropriately. It's hard to eat and chew gum at the same time.
- Scrape leftovers directly into the trash or store them out of sight in opaque containers. Leaving food out on countertops increases the odds of nibbling. Have others help clean up.

**Serving Seconds/Improper Portion Sizes**

- Eat your food from a plate. Putting food on a plate increases your awareness of it. Avoid eating out of bags or containers —it's impossible to judge how much you've eaten.
- Take medium-sized portions of food. Taking too little will create a desire for seconds and, therefore, increase your chances of overeating. Taking a big portion will also result in too many calories.
- When eating a meal, remove serving dishes from the table after everyone has served themselves. People who want more food can get up from the table and serve themselves. Removing dishes from the table reduces the risk of mindless, automatic eating.
- Return bags or containers to their proper place after fixing a plate of food. Food that is put away is less likely to be eaten.

**Eating In Inappropriate Places** — If you regularly eat in front of the television, simply sitting down to watch TV will become a cue for you to eat. Identifying one or two places where it's OK to eat reduces the number of eating cues you have to face.

**Cleaning Your Plate** — Leaving food on your plate is a hard skill to learn. You may have been taught not to "waste" food when others in the world are starving. It's a good idea to leave food on your plate because:

- It helps gradually reduce eating in response to the sight of food. You don't have to eat it just because it's there!
- Even when you're eating relatively small amounts of food, it's good practice for occasions when you are served large portions of food, such as at parties or restaurants.
- It's good practice for eating your favorite foods. It's OK to eat special foods that may be high in fat or calories as long as they are planned, eaten in small amounts, and eaten infrequently.

List your most troublesome eating behaviors, and which skills described above you will use to make changes.

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## The Social Eater

Often, the people we spend time with, our jobs, and day-to-day activities are sources of eating cues. Social cues to eat come from our friends and family, our jobs, and our social life.

**Other People** — Friends, co-workers, or family members can make it difficult to eat in a controlled fashion. They may try to persuade you to eat something you had not planned. Social situations can be stressful, and the stress may be a cue for you to eat inappropriately.

Think of situations in which you have found yourself eating inappropriately. Who was with you? Did they influence your thoughts or feelings immediately before you started eating inappropriately?

Inappropriate eating episode:	Who was present & what was their influence?	What could I do differently?

**Job Requirements** — If your job requires you to travel extensively, work long or erratic hours, or eat out frequently, you will need to develop coping strategies to deal with these additional eating cues. Here are some suggestions:

If you have to travel frequently:

- Carry food with you so you are not stuck having to settle for the inappropriate options usually available in airports, hotels, and office buildings. Bagels, single-serving fruit, and small boxes or bags of low-fat, ready-to-eat cereal are nutritious options that travel well. OPTIFAST® products may be used as a meal replacement or snack. Stay at hotels with fitness facilities available to guests.

If you work long hours:

- Don't skip meals. If you can't get away from your desk for a planned meal, have an emergency stash of appropriate foods or meal replacements so you don't have to skip a meal.
- Keep a list of local restaurants that will deliver healthy food alternatives to your office.

If you eat out frequently:

- Plan for restaurant meals as much as possible by adjusting the other meals in the day.
- Know which restaurants serve healthful alternatives so you can respond when people ask where you would like to go for a business lunch/dinner.

**Social Events** — Parties and hors d'oeuvres; birthdays and cake with ice cream; Thanksgiving and turkey; these are just a few examples of foods often associated with certain social events. Before you attend special events, spend some time planning how you will cope with the many cues you will encounter.

Using the skills you have learned, plan the steps you would take to handle the following high-risk situations. Remember, there may be other cues besides the simple presence of food (i.e., other people, emotions/moods) that may be potential cues for inappropriate eating.

Your manager is throwing a cocktail party at her house to celebrate your promotion.

Potential Cues:	Coping Strategies:



## The Restrained Eater

A restrained eater can be described as always limiting food or the amount eaten. A restrained eater's ability to control eating and weight depends on their ability to remain cool, rational, and "in control." However, several factors tend to disrupt this control, and the person may feel like the dam has broken. Suddenly, he or she slips from being in charge to being "totally out of control."

There are at least five situations likely to disrupt, or "disinhibit," the restrained eater's control over eating.

**The Act of Overeating** — Almost all restrained eaters have a calorie limit, or a list of "bad" foods they feel they shouldn't eat. Once they exceed their allotted calories or consume some of their "bad" foods, they begin to overeat dramatically. If their thoughts were amplified, you'd hear them say things to themselves such as, "Oh well, I've blown my diet. As long as I've overeaten, I might as well eat everything I want." Negative thoughts and feelings about what they ate triggers further overeating. They may need to eat only a few extra calories to trigger their all-or-none thinking.

There are two ways you can combat irrational thoughts:

- Challenge the irrational thought that you've "completely blown it" by challenging your attitude and learning from the situation.
- Write down what you've eaten and total the calories. Getting the facts on paper will help you realize if you have had a lapse. Make a plan to get back on track.

**Fatigue and Negative Emotions** — Restrained eaters are more likely to overeat when they become tired or emotionally upset with little energy left to contend with the tasks of weight management. Overeating is caused by feeling overwhelmed.

You can control your desire to overeat in such circumstances if you:

- Acknowledge your feelings and emotions.
- Recognize and avoid high-risk situations.
- Take steps to minimize stressful incidents.

**Consumption of Alcohol** — Alcohol tends to weaken restraint, leading to a general loosening of control—whether of the tongue, sexual desire, gambling, or aggression.

If you drink alcohol, follow these tips:

- Plan your alcohol consumption carefully so you don't lose control of your eating. Before leaving the house, decide your limit on alcohol. Remove high calorie snacks from reach. While these items are easily resisted sober, they may be irresistible after drinking.
- Have a glass of water or noncaloric beverage in between each alcoholic beverage.
- Beware of the high caloric content of alcoholic beverages. Hard liquor contains about 100 calories per 1-1/2 ounces. Beer, wine, and champagne are also high in empty calories. If you choose to have an alcoholic beverage, a wine spritzer or lite beer are the best choices.

**Social Situations** — Almost everyone overeats on special occasions, whether it is a party with good friends, a company picnic or an evening at a favorite restaurant. Special occasions are particularly difficult for restrained eaters for several reasons. First, a special occasion implies that it's not "business (or weight management) as usual." Instead, it's an invitation to let go of the normal eating routine. Second, people who are trying to manage their weight often feel if other people are eating whatever they want, they should be allowed to do so as well. Having to watch what they eat seems unfair. Third, social events elicit many demands or pressures to eat. Hosts and hostesses offer food repeatedly and appear disappointed when it isn't accepted.

How can you best cope with social situations? Plan in advance what you will eat and how you will respond to urges from others (or desires of your own) to eat more than you had planned.

**Deprivation** — Deprivation or anticipation of deprivation. People who deprive themselves severely, by keeping calories extremely low or by not allowing themselves any of their favorite foods, are likely to binge eat sooner or later. The best way to avoid binge eating is to avoid severe deprivation. Don't restrict your calories too severely (below 1,000 a day) without medical supervision, and allow yourself some of your favorite foods in small quantities.



## Making Appropriate Food Choices

An important question to ask yourself before eating any food, "Is this an appropriate or inappropriate choice?" If the answer is "appropriate," you should proceed to eat and enjoy the food, paying careful attention to eating it slowly. However, if the answer is "inappropriate," or if you're not sure if it's appropriate, you should stop and think about the choices available to you:

- Decide not to eat the food. This is a favorable choice for obvious reasons.
- Go ahead and eat the food. This choice is not satisfactory. Eating the food will probably make you feel upset and could lead to further eating. This choice impedes weight control efforts.
- Take a few moments before eating the food to plan how to include it in your meal plan. In other words, think through your decision and try to make the choice as "appropriate" as possible, instead of simply eating the food impulsively without regard to your calorie limit.

Planning is the key to making inappropriate eating more appropriate. Try to determine how you can work the desired food into your calorie limit. Options for doing this include:

- Eating a small amount of the food.
- Postponing consumption of the food.
- Moderately increasing your physical activity during the day.
- Decreasing food intake slightly over the next few meals.

A key goal of the OPTIFAST® Program is to help you develop the skills you will need to plan and select healthy meals. Today's giant servings of food, pervasive eating cues, and packed schedules can make it difficult for even the most dedicated weight manager to avoid overeating. Several studies have shown limiting the variety of foods you eat and using portion controlled servings of foods, such as frozen dinners or OPTIFAST products, can help you manage your weight long-term and meet your daily nutritional goals. The program dietitian can help you plan a satisfying eating plan using selected amounts of portion-controlled foods to help you change your eating behaviors.

## key goals

Using the tips in this module, develop 2 – 3 goals to work towards.

1	
2	
3	

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