

Overcoming Your Binge Eating Disorder

by Angela M. Doel, M.S.

A
THERAPEUTIC
ASSIGNMENT
WORKBOOK

40 Therapeutic Activities To Free You From the Guilt,
Shame, and Self-Loathing of Binge Eating Disorder

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Shame, and Self-Loathing of Binge Eating Disorder

Between Sessions Resources
Norwalk, CT, USA

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Disclaimer: This book is intended to be used as an adjunct to psychotherapy. If you are experiencing serious symptoms or problems in your life, seek the help of an experienced mental health professional.

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About the Series

Overcoming Your Binge Eating Disorder is part of a series of workbooks designed to give therapists and their clients easy access to practical evidence-based psychotherapy tools. Each workbook represents a complete treatment program.

Dedicated to my children, with love - Aura, Amber, & Justin.
My greatest teachers.

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Introduction

Binge eating disorder (BED) is the most common eating disorder in adults. This disorder is characterized by uncontrolled excessive eating, followed by feelings of embarrassment, disgust, shame, or guilt. BED is different from bulimia nervosa, because people who binge eat typically do not compensate for their binges through purging, intermittent calorie restriction, or excessive exercise.

People with binge eating disorder are usually overweight. They may feel like they have no control over their eating and often eat in secret. They eat to excess even when they are not hungry.

Some of the signs of binge eating disorder include:

- Consuming unusually large amounts of food in a distinct period of time—within a 2-hour time frame.
- Reoccurring episodes—at least once per week for at least three months.
- Eating rapidly and uncontrollably.
- Eating even when not physically hungry.
- Eating around other people, or in public, is uncomfortable or avoided altogether.
- Hiding food or food containers and wrappers in strange places.
- Hoarding, stockpiling, or stealing food.
- Creating a lifestyle or rituals in order to schedule binge sessions.
- Eating in secret.
- Eating when overwhelmed, upset, or stressed to cope with distressing feelings.
- Overeating when alone; eating normally when around other people.
- Eating continuously throughout the day, with no planned mealtimes.
- Inability to control how much food is consumed.
- Experimenting with fad diets or repeatedly starting and stopping diets.
- Experiencing unwanted weight gain that may lead to obesity.
- Frequent co-occurring mental health issues, such as substance abuse, depression, or anxiety.

Binge eating disorder impacts people of all ages, cultures, and walks of life. Currently more than 7 million Americans struggle with binge eating disorder.

Not surprisingly, there are medical problems associated with this disorder, including high blood pressure, type II diabetes, irregular menstrual cycles, skin conditions, and heart disease.

Digestive issues, such as stomach cramps or other non-specific gastrointestinal complaints (e.g., constipation or acid reflux) are also common. About half of people who binge eat also have depression.

If you have BED, this workbook can help you successfully overcome this distressing disorder. The workbook is intended to be used along with help from a psychotherapist or counselor. Binge eating disorder can be very difficult to overcome alone, and your counselor or therapist can help you focus on what you can do to reduce and eventually eliminate binge eating.

What This Workbook Can Do for You

This workbook will help you explore and assess the role that BED plays in your life so you can establish healthy eating habits and learn alternative ways to cope with feelings. You will identify personal strengths, values, and interests, as well as learn techniques to overcome BED.

The first section of the workbook, **Self-Exploration**, focuses on assessment and education about BED, enabling you to develop strategies for identifying, planning, and reaching your goals. Although there are basic symptoms common to all people with BED, each person's experience is unique.

The second section, **Self-Monitoring**, will teach you ways to establish healthy eating and activity patterns, as well as monitor food- and eating-related behaviors. This section allows you to commit to making tangible changes through healthy daily habits.

The third section, **Techniques to Stop Binge Eating**, focuses on building skills to manage your emotions and choices, as well as effectively cope with the stress that can trigger overeating. BED is rooted in low self-esteem, difficulty managing stress, and negative feelings related to body weight or shape. Often linked to other mental health issues, BED is exacerbated by anxiety and depression. The condition is sustained and entrenched by perceived lack of control, guilt, shame, and embarrassment surrounding food and eating. This section presents tools to counteract the self-defeating behaviors associated with binge eating.

The final section of this workbook, **Relapse Prevention**, focuses on preventing setbacks and relapses. The best way to prevent a relapse is to develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

Eating disorders are especially difficult to overcome because food is a necessary part of life. Unlike people who struggle with drug or alcohol addiction, those who struggle with binge eating cannot just eliminate food. Even though recovery might be a difficult process, you can learn techniques to decrease and eventually eliminate compulsive overeating and bingeing.

Section 1. Self-Exploration

And I said to my body, softly, "I want to be your friend."

It took a long breath and replied, "I've been waiting my whole life for this." *Nayyirah Waheed*

Do You Have Binge Eating Disorder?

Objective

To identify the severity of your unhealthy eating habits and determine if you have binge eating disorder.

You Should Know

Disordered eating refers to an unhealthy relationship with food and may include chronic dieting, compulsive overeating, and bingeing. These habits can be warning signs for binge eating disorder. Problematic eating habits are closely associated with other health issues, such as obesity, type II diabetes, depression, and anxiety. Identifying the severity of your unhealthy eating habits is the first step in establishing a plan to overcome an eating disorder.

Good nutrition is closely connected to emotional, physical, and mental health. Eating a healthy and balanced diet provides your brain and body with required vitamins, minerals, and nutrients. Your diet impacts your brain's neurochemistry, which controls your mood and your response to stress. It also influences the interaction between your brain and body, as well as memory and intellectual functioning. Healthy eating habits can be difficult to maintain, and if you have poor eating habits, your body and brain are not receiving necessary nutrients for optimal functioning.

Do you frequently overeat while feeling out of control? You might have binge eating disorder, particularly if you consume large amounts of food within a discrete period of time (e.g., eating 10,000 calories within 2 hours). You might feel powerless to stop eating, which leads to feelings of guilt, disgust, or sadness. You might use food to regulate, control, or numb unpleasant thoughts, emotions, or feelings.

Binge eating disorder includes the following eating patterns:

- You overeat excessively and compulsively.
- You feel distressed about your eating and the way it affects your mood and your life.
- You feel out of control when you eat yet resume eating even if you are full.
- You often eat alone because you are embarrassed or feel ashamed.
- You feel depressed, guilty, or disgusted after eating.

Food is not something to control or battle. Instead, food is a nourishing fuel that supports good health. Healthy or normalized eating involves having at least three well-balanced meals and two

or three snacks each day (on average, eating 1,800–2,200 calories every day). If you are eating much less than this, your portion sizes are too small. If you are eating much more than this, you are likely overeating. This worksheet will help you identify the severity of your unhealthy eating habits.

What to Do

Read the following 53 statements and rate yourself, where:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 = I rarely or never experience this. | 2 = This is a slight problem for me. |
| 3 = I experience this sometimes. | 4 = I experience this frequently. |
| 5 = This is a significant problem for me. | 6 = I always experience this. |
| 7 = This is a severe problem and causes significant challenges in my life. | |

- _____ I eat quickly and I feel uncomfortably full from eating so quickly.
- _____ I lose control over how much I eat.
- _____ I cannot control my eating.
- _____ I feel helpless when it comes to controlling my urges to overeat.
- _____ I feel guilt or shame after I eat.
- _____ Food controls my life.
- _____ I skip meals because I do not have time to eat, then I overeat because I am 'starving.'
- _____ I feel bloated after I eat.
- _____ I eat fast food more than three times each week.
- _____ I eat in secret or 'sneak' food.
- _____ I eat when I am bored.
- _____ Nothing seems to distract me from thinking about food.
- _____ I eat fried foods more than three times each week.
- _____ I go off and on diets and try 'fad' diets.
- _____ I experience intense food cravings.
- _____ I feel 'foggy' and have trouble concentrating, especially later in the day.
- _____ I rely on caffeine to get through the day.
- _____ My weight fluctuates by more than 5 lbs.
- _____ I am gassy, constipated, or have diarrhea more than once per week.
- _____ I eat even when I am not hungry because I feel distressed or upset.
- _____ I drink soda or sweetened drinks daily.
- _____ I purchase food and hide it.
- _____ I hide empty packages or wrappers after eating.

- _____ I eat ignore my body's feeling of fullness.
- _____ I eat after 8:00 p.m.
- _____ I find myself waking up in the middle of the night to eat.
- _____ I eat so much that I feel nauseous.
- _____ I think about how losing weight would make me so much happier.
- _____ I plan to eat when I am alone so no one will watch me eat.
- _____ I skip meals and then grab convenience foods because I am so hungry.
- _____ My evening meal is the largest meal of the day.
- _____ I find myself finishing entire packages of food because I tune out while watching TV.
- _____ I eat even if I am not hungry.
- _____ I overeat foods that I really do not enjoy.
- _____ I constantly think about when I will eat my next meal.
- _____ When I eat "forbidden foods" I feel like I blew my diet and eat even more.
- _____ I create strict diets for myself but break the diets and binge eat.
- _____ I cannot voluntarily stop eating.
- _____ I do not eat as much when I am with other people because I feel self-conscious.
- _____ I feel judged by other people because of my weight, what I eat, or how much I eat.
- _____ I do not eat regular meals because I am always snacking.
- _____ I find myself snacking even after a large meal.
- _____ I spend a lot of time thinking about how much I ate or trying not to eat more.
- _____ I don't know how much I should eat in order to feel satisfied.
- _____ I don't know what is a "normal" amount of food for me.
- _____ I plan my daily schedule around eating.
- _____ I deserve to treat myself after a long or stressful day.
- _____ I use food to manage my stress.
- _____ I overeat whenever I am upset.
- _____ I feel disgusted with myself after overeating.
- _____ I feel fat and I am disgusted with my body.
- _____ It is difficult for me to lose weight.
- _____ I am unhappy with my body shape or size.

Add up your score: _____

Your Score:

1 to 124 points - Indicates a mild problem. Your responses suggest that you are not experiencing major concerns about your weight or shape, nor are you currently engaging in many unhealthy eating habits.

125 to 250 points - Indicates a moderate problem. Your responses suggest that you are experiencing some concerns about your weight or shape, and you are engaging in some unhealthy eating behaviors that you might want to address. Seeking support from a therapist, mentor, or group might be helpful.

More than 250 points - Indicates a severe problem. Your responses suggest that you are experiencing significant concerns about your weight or shape, and you are engaging in eating behaviors that are leading to significant distress in your life.

Reflections on This Exercise

What are your top five areas of concern regarding your eating and/or body weight and shape?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

How do your eating habits affect your day-to-day life and routines? Describe.

What are three things you can do to improve your eating habits?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from completing this exercise?

What Triggers Your Binge Eating?

Objective

To identify and address the internal and external triggers that precede your binge eating.

You Should Know

A trigger can be external—like a person, place, or situation—or it can be internal—like a memory, emotion, or sensation.

Triggers for binge eating are upsetting, and people often eat for comfort. People typically binge on foods such as ice cream, fried foods, or pastries—foods that make them feel good or remind them of positive experiences or comforting memories. Typically, these “comfort foods” are high in sugar, salt, and carbohydrates, which are known to increase cravings rather than provide a sense of fullness or satisfaction.

Just seeing this type of food can trigger you to overeat, so early in recovery it might be helpful to avoid having comfort food around the house or in your desk at the office.

Triggers sometimes take on a life of their own, manipulating moods, feelings, or behavior, outside of conscious awareness. Becoming conscious of personal triggers is the key to self-awareness, and self-awareness is the key to overcoming binge eating. With awareness triggers can be identified and managed.

What to Do

In this worksheet, you will identify your personal triggers. Be as honest and nonjudgmental as you can as you make your lists. Once you know what triggers you, you can make healthier choices.

List the people or situations in your life that might trigger a binge.

List the places where you might be likely to binge.

List the time(s) of day when you might be likely to binge.

List specific foods that trigger overeating.

List any specific memories or experiences that are likely to trigger your desire to binge eat.

Now it is time to brainstorm ideas about how you can better deal with the triggers you identified. For example, are there ways you can cope with your emotions in order to avoid overeating? This could include distracting yourself, calling a friend, or some other means of avoiding binge eating.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what you learned from completing this exercise.

Identifying the Messages You Received About Food

Objective

To identify the messages you have received about food and eating, and explore how those messages affect your present-day eating habits.

You Should Know

Your most basic messages about food were communicated to you during childhood. Your parents may have talked to you about your eating habits, but you most likely learned by simply watching the adults around you. Hopefully, you learned some positive, common-sense rules about food and eating, like eating in moderation and maintaining a healthy and balanced diet. You may have received some messages that were not helpful and actually contributed to the development of poor eating habits, like eating sweets to reward yourself or eating carbohydrate-loaded “comfort food” when you are upset.

The culture you grew up in also provided messages about food and eating. Some cultures have traditions of overindulging. Other cultures have favorite fatty or high-calorie foods. Some cultures have diets that are lower in fat and sugar and, not surprisingly, the people from these cultures live longer and healthier lives.

Early influences are not the only thing that impact eating habits. Recent research at Harvard University has shown that social circles—the people you interact with on a daily basis—can dramatically impact your own health and fitness. In fact, just having a close friend who is obese raises your own risk by 57 percent.

Finally, you receive a constant stream of messages from the media that can affect your attitude about eating and food. Every commercial you see advertising fast food features attractive, thin people having a great time enjoying their unhealthy and calorie-laden food! Advertisers spend a lot of time and money researching how to get you to buy their products or eat at their restaurants, and the messages are often misleading.

This worksheet will help you identify the messages you received about food at an early age, as well as the ones you are continuing to get on a daily basis. Once you acknowledge these messages, you can identify the ones that are unhealthy and learn to ignore them so you can choose more conscious and nutritious eating habits.

Reflections on This Exercise

What do you think was the most significant message from your childhood that has influenced the way you eat today?

What do you think is the most significant message from the culture you are from that has influenced the way you eat today?

What do you think is the most significant message from your social group that has influenced the way you eat today?

What do you think is the most significant message from the media that has influenced the way you eat today?

Now that you have identified these messages, describe what you can do to develop more conscious and nutritious eating habits.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what you learned from this exercise.

Are You a Distracted Eater?

Objective

To eat your meals without being distracted by other activities.

You Should Know

Multitasking while you eat, like watching television or working on the computer, can be a contributing factor to overeating. However, if you slow down and savor your food, you are more likely to be aware of when you are full and to eat smaller amounts of food.

Research indicates that distracting yourself while you are eating can lead to obesity and binge eating for a variety of reasons.

Distracted people tend to:

- Eat faster.
- Fail to thoroughly chew food.
- Eat more snacks.
- Feel less full even after eating a meal.
- Consume more calories during meals.

Paying attention when you are eating will help you slow down and savor each bite, allowing you to listen to your body when it signals that it has had enough food. It actually takes about 20 minutes before your brain recognizes the signal from your stomach that you are full, and if you eat in a rush or you are distracted by other activities, you are more likely to eat more than you need within that 20-minute time frame.

Eating is a time to connect with your body while nourishing it. Healthy eating means creating an optimal eating experience that is relaxed and free from distractions. Eating should be a pleasant experience, and, of course, nutritious eating is vital to your health. So, pay attention while you are eating! It is important to your health.

What to Do

Circle the activities that you frequently engage in while eating:

Talking on the phone

Preparing school lunches

Watching TV or a video

Driving

Walking around

Texting

Performing household chores

Reading

Working at your desk

Creating lists

Playing games on your phone

Surfing the internet

Checking social media

Checking email or voicemail

What else do you do when you are eating?

How often are you distracted when you are eating?

Every Meal _____ Most Meals _____

Only certain meals (circle): Breakfast Lunch Dinner Snacks

What are some of the reasons you think you eat while engaging in other activities? Check the ones that apply.

- _____ I am bored while eating.
- _____ I prefer to avoid conversation with others, so I try to appear “busy” while eating.
- _____ I have so much to do that I have no time to sit down and focus on eating.
- _____ I just like doing several things at a time.
- _____ I feel guilty if I don’t do something while eating.
- _____ I just can’t imagine what it would be like to eat without doing any other activity.
- _____ I eat most meals alone and doing something else keeps me from feeling lonely.

Now that you have learned how you distract yourself while eating, it is time to commit to eating meals without doing anything else. Here are some ideas that can help you focus on eating. Put a check by the ideas that you will try.

- _____ Eat while sitting (not standing) and designate one spot for eating—kitchen or dining room.
- _____ Set a regular place setting (plate, utensils, napkin) each time you eat.
- _____ Create a pleasant environment where you eat (e.g., light a candle, place fresh flowers on the table).
- _____ Avoid bringing anything to the table with you, including electronics, books or papers, or work of any kind.
- _____ Don’t eat with the TV, phone, or computer on.
- _____ Put everything you are going to eat for that meal on your plate and stop eating when your plate is empty.
- _____ Consciously slow down while you eat, paying attention to the sensory experience of eating. This is referred to as ‘Mindful Eating.’

What was the percentage of meals you ate *without* distracting yourself? Calculate this by dividing the number of meals when you weren't distracted by the total number of meals on your list. _____

Reflections on This Exercise

What do you think is the biggest obstacle to eating without distractions?

What other changes in your daily habits do you think will help keep you from overeating?

Habits can be hard to break. Can you think of anyone who can help you break the habit of distracted eating? Describe how this person can assist you.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what learned from this exercise.

Is It Time to Give Up Chronic Dieting?

Objective

To identify the ways that chronic dieting affects your life.

You Should Know

An estimated 45 million Americans start diets each year. According to WebMD, even when people lose weight, up to 80 percent will gain it back. Many people say that they go on and off diets for much of their adult lives, which typically leads to frustration, low self-esteem, and even depression. Chronic dieting contracts your world and limits your choices. If you create rules around eating to control your food consumption and environment, you may avoid certain restaurants, events, activities, or even travel. Dieting might even negatively affect your relationships. Chronic dieting translates to chronic failure, which can obviously have a significant impact on your self-esteem. If you are always dieting, you create a constant state of “not being good enough,” and you might believe that your happiness is based in the future—when you are the “right” weight.

Besides the psychological effects of chronic dieting, medical professionals indicate that this type of lifestyle can result in serious health problems. So-called “yo-yo dieting” has been associated with muscle loss, increased body fat, and an elevated risk of diabetes and heart disease.

Nutritionists generally agree that a much better approach to dieting is to simply adopt a healthy lifestyle, which includes nutritious eating, regularly engaging in exercise, and adopting healthy ways to manage stress. Even the well-known weight loss company Weight Watchers has recently shifted its focus from its popular diet to an emphasis on healthy living, using the new tagline “Wellness That Works.”

This worksheet will help you examine how chronic dieting has affected your life. The statements and questions that follow will help you explore what might be preventing you from living a healthy lifestyle, finding self-acceptance, and permanently giving up chronic dieting.

What to Do

Check off the statements that are usually true for you.

- I avoid eating in social situations or avoid situations altogether if food is involved.
- I worry about what people think about my body or the way that I eat.
- I compare what I eat, including quantity and type, to what other people eat.
- I eat differently when other people are present.
- I constantly worry about food and what I eat.
- I have strict rules about food and/or eating.
- I fantasize about food.

- I'm preoccupied with thoughts about what I eat and don't eat.
- I count calories, carbohydrates, fat grams, or other factors about food.
- Foods are either good or bad.
- I'm afraid of feeling too full.
- I don't trust my body and its signals.
- I feel guilt or shame if I eat "bad" foods.
- I worry that if I eat forbidden foods, I will lose control and be unable to stop eating.
- I experience mood swings because I delay eating.
- I frequently binge eat or find myself overeating.
- I avoid physical intimacy because I feel fat.
- I frequently discuss food, weight, or dieting.
- I ignore food rules when I'm on vacation and eat more than I require.
- I exercise only to burn calories or lose weight.
- I overeat when I'm upset or stressed.
- If I overeat, I compensate in some way (e.g., skipping meals or "fasting").
- If I break my eating rules, I end up bingeing later.
- I worry that I will not have enough to eat.
- I can't determine when I'm physically hungry or when I'm satisfied (full).
- Dieting and/or food restriction causes me to be irritable.
- Even when I lose weight, I still feel too fat.
- I am constantly comparing myself to other people and how their bodies look.
- I hate myself when I lose weight and then gain it back.
- I tend to start the latest fad diet and soon lose my enthusiasm.

If you marked off:

1–10 items: You have a slight problem with chronic dieting.

10–20 items: You have a moderate problem with chronic dieting.

20 or more items: This indicates you have a significant problem with chronic dieting.

Reflections on This Exercise

What do you think would happen if you just stopped dieting? What is your greatest fear?

Describe one habit that you could start today which will contribute to living a healthy life rather than one of chronic dieting?

We are all constantly bombarded by cultural messages that suggest we have to be thin to be happy. Make a statement that refutes this unrealistic cultural message.

How can you get support for replacing chronic dieting with a healthy lifestyle? Write down the names of people, resources, or organizations that can support your efforts.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Identifying Faulty Beliefs That Support Unhealthy Eating Habits

Objective

To identify and address the beliefs you have that support unhealthy eating habits.

You Should Know

Your values, perceptions, and attitudes make up your belief system. Your beliefs shape the way you see yourself, other people, the world, and your future. Sometimes you might have negative viewpoints about yourself and the world around you. Also called faulty beliefs, these views affect your self-esteem, confidence, and your relationships with other people. You rely on your beliefs to solve problems and navigate day-to-day life, but faulty beliefs sabotage your best efforts. Over time, relying on faulty beliefs can be harmful. Faulty beliefs may lead to compulsive eating habits, chronic dieting, or binge eating. If these beliefs are not properly addressed, it will be more difficult to break the pattern of unhealthy eating habits.

What to Do

Research has confirmed that people with eating disorders have more faulty beliefs than those who have healthier eating habits. Some of these beliefs have nothing to do with food or eating, but these beliefs support the continuation of unhealthy eating habits. In order to change faulty beliefs, first identify which faulty beliefs you might have and then recognize the role they play in your life. Review this list of beliefs, along with examples of each, and check the ones that apply to you.

- Defectiveness/Shame (I'm ugly, I'm so fat).
- Insufficient Self-Control (I can't control myself around food).
- Failure to Achieve (I am weak and stupid. I will never lose weight).
- Entitlement (I can eat whatever I want because I deserve a reward).
- Dependence/Incompetence (I just can't handle stress).
- Vulnerability (Bad things always happen to me. What is the point?).
- Emotional Inhibition (If I share my emotions bad things will happen).
- Emotional Deprivation (Nobody will love me because I am disgusting).
- Abandonment/Instability (My spouse is going to leave me because I am fat).

___ Mistrust/Misuse (I can't trust anyone to actually be there for me).

___ Subjugation (I have to lose weight or bad things will happen).

___ Self-Sacrifice (My family's needs always come first).

___ Unrelenting Standards (I strive to be the best, but I always fail). What are the top three faulty beliefs that you have identified?

Now begin to notice when you rely on faulty beliefs. Since you have identified these beliefs, you will start to notice what situations trigger you. This knowledge gives you the opportunity to change your beliefs, replacing them with new ways of thinking. Over the next week, record when you find yourself defaulting to your faulty beliefs. Describe what you did in response.

Date	Faulty Belief	Trigger	What Did You Do?

Describe patterns in how you respond to triggers.

Begin to test out your faulty beliefs by examining if there is truth to your views. For instance, do people actually reject you because you are overweight? Do your loved ones still care about you even if you don't reach your desired weight? Is someone offering you advice because they don't approve of you, or is it because they care about your well-being? By continually confronting your faulty beliefs, you will begin to develop new beliefs that are more realistic.

Referring back to the list of faulty beliefs, write down three realistic replacement beliefs.

Reflections on This Exercise

Describe the ways your faulty beliefs support your unhealthy eating habits.

If you change your faulty beliefs, how will this affect your unhealthy eating habits? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

How Does Stress Affect Your Eating Habits?

Objective

To identify how stress affects your eating habits and explore alternative ways to cope with stress.

You Should Know

Stress is part of life. You might experience daily stressors like being stuck in traffic or waking up with a splitting headache when you have a full day of work ahead. You might experience more significant stressors from time to time, such as losing a job, getting a divorce, or moving to a new city.

You might believe that there is nothing you can do about stress. But you actually have a lot more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you are in control of your life is the foundation of effective stress management. You can choose how you manage stress by taking charge of your reactions, thoughts, emotions, environment, and the way you deal with daily challenges and problems. You can choose positive ways to deal with stress, including getting exercise, receiving support from a friend, listening to relaxing music, and so on. You can also deal with stress in negative or unhealthy ways, which may lead to even more stress. Relying on alcohol and drugs, compulsive shopping, or overeating as a way to seek comfort are unhealthy ways to cope with stress.

It might seem easy to turn to food as a way to deal with stress because so-called “comfort foods” are relatively inexpensive and almost always readily available. High calorie foods, full of carbohydrates, sugar, and salt, also work very well at giving you an immediate sense of satisfaction, although this lasts only a short time. When you binge or overeat, you might feel ashamed, guilty, embarrassed, or angry at yourself—leading to additional stress, which can trigger another round of unhealthy eating.

What can you do, other than overeat comfort foods, to cope when the inevitable stressors crop up? You can deal with and reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. Here are some ideas to cope with stress that are unrelated to food:

- Go for a walk. Spend time in nature.
- Call a family member or friend.
- Exercise and break a sweat.
- Write in your journal.
- Take a long bath—use scented candles or incense.
- Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea.

- Play with a pet.
- Work in your garden.
- Get a massage.
- Curl up with a good book.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a comedy.

Describe other ways to cope with stress:

Research indicates that setting aside daily time for relaxation is a necessity, not a luxury, and you will learn ways to effectively deal with daily stressors—instead of defaulting to unhealthy habits. This worksheet is designed to help you identify stressful situations and find ways to cope with the stress rather than binge or overeat unhealthy foods.

What to Do

For one week, notice each time you feel stressed and what has triggered it. Write down how it affects your eating and what you can do to cope with the stress rather than binge eat. Then, rate how successful you were in using healthier ways to cope with stress, where 1 = Not very successful to 10 = Very successful.

Date	Stressful situation or trigger	Did you binge or overeat unhealthy food? (Y / N) Describe.	What else can you do to cope?	How successful I were you?

Reflections on This Exercise

What were the top three eating-related ways you identified that helped you cope with stress?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

What healthy ways to cope with stress allowed you to avoid bingeing and overeating when you were faced with stressful situations or challenges? Describe what worked for you.

Can you think of other ways you can change the relationship between stress and resorting to binge eating? Describe.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Automatic and Distorted Thinking

Objective

To identify and address the distorted and automatic thoughts that support binge eating habits.

You Should Know

Distorted thinking refers to the ways your mind convinces you of something that is not true. These inaccurate and often automatic thoughts reinforce negative thinking or feelings. You tell yourself something that seems real and true, but the thoughts only serve to support you in feeling bad about yourself.

The following are types of automatic distorted thinking you might experience, along with examples:

- **Mind Reading** - You believe that you know what people think. *He thinks I'm fat.*
- **Fortune Telling** - You expect that bad things will happen in the future. *If I eat dessert, I won't have the ability to stop and I will feel sick later.*
- **Catastrophizing** - What has happened (or what will happen) is unbearable and terrible. *I will go crazy and eat until I pass out.*
- **Labeling** - You assign negative traits to yourself. *I'm a horrible person because I ate an entire box of donuts.*
- **Discounting the Positive** - You trivialize or invalidate good things that happen. *It doesn't matter that I ate a salad for lunch and went on a walk because I binged later.*
- **Negative Filtering** - You focus on the negative and rarely notice the positive. *Even though people tell me I look nice in this dress, I know that I look fat.*
- **Overgeneralizing** - On the basis of one incident you perceive a pattern of negativity. *I went to a party and ate too much, so I'm not going to any more parties because I will overeat.*
- **Dichotomous Thinking** - You view things in all-or-nothing terms. *If I don't exercise every day to lose weight, there is no point in exercising at all.*
- **"Over Shoulding"** - Things are interpreted how they "should" be rather than focusing on what is. *I should eat more vegetables -even though I hate vegetables- because I need to lose weight.*
- **Personalizing** - You attribute a disproportionate amount of blame to yourself. *It is my fault that I overeat until I feel sick.*
- **Blaming** - You fail to take responsibility for your choices and instead focus on other people as the source of your negative thoughts or feelings. *If my partner didn't buy junk food at the grocery store, I wouldn't gain weight and feel miserable.*
- **Unfair Comparisons** - You have unrealistic standards or expectations. *She has the perfect body. I'll never look like that!*
- **Regret Orientation** - You focus on doing better in the past rather than on what you can change now. *I ate so much on Monday that I should have exercised an extra hour yesterday.*

- **What If?** - You constantly worry “what if” something will happen. *What if I attend the wedding and eat so many pieces of cake that I feel sick?*
- **Emotional Reasoning** - Your feelings and emotions guide how you interpret reality. *I am so overwhelmed and stressed, so I have no time to prepare healthy meals.*
- **Inability to Disconfirm** - You reject statements or arguments that might contradict your negative thoughts. *Who cares if my partner thinks I’m attractive? I know that I’m disgusting.*
- **Judgment Focus** - Everything is viewed in arbitrary terms of evaluation of good or bad or right or wrong, instead of describing, accepting, or attempting to understand. *I was really bad last week because I binged every night after work.*

What to Do

Following the examples, describe five or six negative thoughts that you have about your body, food, or eating. Using the list, identify which cognitive distortions apply.

Negative Automatic Thoughts	Cognitive Distortions
<i>Ex. “I am so stuffed. I ate too much, and I’m sure I’ve already gained weight.”</i>	<i>Regret Orientation, Emotional Reasoning</i>
<i>Ex. “If I eat in front of my family, they’ll think I’m a pig.”</i>	<i>Mind Reading, Labeling, Negative Filter, Judgment Focus, Dichotomous Thinking</i>

Next keep a record of your thoughts and identify what might trigger negative, automatic thinking. Print several copies of this chart so that you can track your thoughts for two weeks.

Event/ Situation: <i>What, When, Where?</i>	Automatic Thoughts: <i>What was I thinking during this situation and what does that say about me?</i>	Emotions: <i>How did I feel?</i>	Evidence Supporting Thoughts: <i>Note concrete observable facts.</i>	Evidence Against Thoughts: <i>Identify facts that challenge thoughts.</i>	Healthier Response: <i>Rewrite your thoughts.</i>

Reflections on This Exercise

Describe what you learned about your patterns of automatic and distorted thinking.

What are the three most common cognitive distortions you find yourself using?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What typically triggers automatic negative thinking?

What are three ways you can replace distorted thoughts with healthier responses?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Tracking Binges Through Self-Monitoring

Objective

To identify and track binge eating episodes.

You Should Know

Self-monitoring involves keeping track of behaviors, symptoms, or experiences within a specific time period. Self-monitoring is an important part of managing binge eating. Tracking your eating with a log or diary can help you better understand your current habits so that you can reduce and eventually eliminate overeating and bingeing. One reason that self-monitoring is helpful is that it can be difficult to recall thoughts, feelings, or behaviors after time has passed. Following a binge, self-monitoring makes it possible for you to get an accurate picture of what is going on with your eating behavior.

First, review the basic characteristics that define a binge episode:

- Eating large amounts of food in less than two hours.
- Eating even when you are full.
- Feeling powerless to stop eating.
- Feeling disgust, shame, embarrassment, anxiety, or depression following overeating.
- Eating in secret.
- Hoarding, stealing, or hiding food to prepare for the binge.

The most common triggers for binge eating include distressing emotions, interpersonal or relationship issues, stress or challenges, or feeling bad about yourself.

Describe other triggers.

What to Do

Make copies of the chart and track your food consumption for two weeks. Record where you were, how you felt, and what you were doing. If you are unsure if an episode was a binge, compare it to what a typical person would eat as a snack or meal.

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you learn about yourself during this exercise? Did you discover a pattern in overeating/bingeing episodes? Describe.

In general, what seemed to prompt binge episodes? Include interactions with people, stressful situations, or upsetting emotions.

Describe how overeating or bingeing impacted your daily routine.

What can you do to decrease the frequency of binge episodes?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what you learned from this exercise.

Learning to Eat When You Are Hungry

Objective

To identify when you are eating for emotional reasons instead of when you are actually hungry.

You Should Know

How can you determine if you are eating for emotional reasons? You might overeat or binge when you are anxious, distressed, or depressed. You might eat because of food triggers or because you are bored. Food triggers can include the sight or smell of food, or even just being around people who are eating.

- There are common body signals of hunger.
- Your energy wanes to the point of feeling sleepy or lethargic.
- You might feel dull or drained, like you need a nap.
- You might feel irritable.
- You might feel lightheaded or develop a headache.
- You might experience difficulty focusing or concentrating.
- You might be distracted by thoughts of eating or food.
- There might be an aching or gnawing sensation in your stomach.
- You might feel gurgling, rumbling, or experience a dull empty feeling.

Following your body's signals and eating only when you are hungry allows you to avoid overeating. Not only is it important to tune in to your hunger cues, it is also important to stop eating when you feel full. The more you pay attention to your body's cues, the more you will recognize the subtle signs of hunger and fullness. You will be less likely to eat for emotional reasons.

This worksheet helps you identify when you are eating for emotional reasons and when you are beginning to follow your body's hunger and fullness cues.

What to Do

Each time you eat, slow yourself down and chew each bite about 15 times or until you reflexively swallow. Focus on how your stomach feels because the empty feeling will be replaced with a gentle pressure. When you feel this light pressure in your stomach, stop eating. Wait for several minutes to decide if you are still hungry. Record your responses for each meal and snack. Make copies of the chart and track your food consumption for two weeks.

Date/ Time	Hunger Signs	Describe Your Emotions	What did you eat?	Overeat or Binge (Y / N)

Reflections on This Exercise

During this exercise, could you identify your body's hunger cues? What were the most common signs you were hungry?

If you overate, what emotions were you experiencing prior to eating?

When you were aware of your hunger cues, were you less likely to overeat? Describe.

Could you identify when you were full? When you stopped eating, were you usually physically comfortable or did you feel stuffed? Describe your experiences.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what else can you do to make improvements in this area.

Are You Motivated to Stop Binge Eating?

Objective

To identify if you are motivated to change your binge eating habits.

You Should Know

To decrease and eventually eliminate binge eating, you have to really *want* to stop. Binge eating can be a very difficult habit to break.

The first step is to identify reasons why you no longer want this habit in your life.

Circle your response to each point.

- Will stopping binge eating help you be a better friend, parent, or spouse?
Yes No
- If you stop binge eating, do you think you will be happier and feel healthier?
Yes No
- Are you embarrassed about your binge eating? If you stop, will you feel less shame and guilt?
Yes No
- If you stop bingeing, do you think you will feel better about your appearance?
Yes No

Some days you might have difficulty maintaining your motivation. What if your main motivation for recovery is to succeed in your career, but then you lose your job? What if you want to recover so that you can improve your relationship with your partner, but then the relationship ends? What if you experience physical or financial limitations? What if everything seems to be going wrong in your life? If you feel like things are falling apart in your life, will you be able to maintain your motivation? You may have the urge to binge, and you may experience thoughts such as, “Life is so hard anyway, I might as well eat until I feel better,” or, “I want to stop bingeing so that I can enjoy life, but life is really hard, so there is no reason not to overeat!” What can you do if you have self-sabotaging thoughts? You can choose to pay them no attention, or you can reframe how you think about your motivation to stop bingeing.

Reframing your thoughts refers to adjusting how you think about your reasons for recovery so that those reasons are not only about things going well in your life. It is important to be hopeful and optimistic, but if your motivation is based on things going well in your life, you might place yourself at risk for setbacks or relapse. You can pick yourself up using healthy tools—without resorting to bingeing as a way to cope.

Your motivation may come and go, and you might experience indecision and ambivalence.

Understanding that your motivation may ebb and flow is important in reducing your feelings of discouragement, as well as in increasing your chance for long-term success.

The first step is to determine if you are ready to begin the process of decreasing and eventually eliminating binge eating episodes. This worksheet will help you explore your motivation for change.

What to Do

Rate yourself on the following statements. Use the scale 1 = Don't agree at all to 10 = Strongly agree. Then answer the questions below.

- ___ I feel 100% motivated to eliminate binge eating as a way to cope with my feelings.
- ___ I believe that my life will improve if I learn ways of coping other than binge eating.
- ___ I understand that it is important to maintain a healthy eating plan, which includes 3 standard-size meals and 1–2 snacks each day.
- ___ I am confident that I can learn alternative ways to cope with upset and stress.
- ___ I am committed to changing the way I eat.
- ___ I want to regain control of my eating.
- ___ I can find other ways to deal with my problems than by overeating.
- ___ I am willing to try various tools and techniques to eliminate binge eating from my life.
- ___ I am willing to change my routines or schedule in order to change my eating habits.
- ___ I am committed to eliminating binge eating from my life.
- ___ I am willing to change the way I think about food.

Total Score _____

If your score is lower than 50, then you might have low motivation to stop binge eating. It will be difficult (but not impossible!) to change this behavior.

Reflections on This Exercise

If your motivation is low, what can you do to motivate yourself to change your eating habits?

If you decide to make changes, how confident are you that you will succeed? Explain why you feel this way.

Identify any barriers to making changes in your eating habits.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Does Using Alcohol or Drugs Make Your Eating Problems Worse?

Objective

To identify how using drugs or alcohol affects your eating habits.

You Should Know

Researchers have found that up to 50 percent of people with eating disorders also abuse alcohol or drugs. Eating disorders and substance abuse problems have similar origins. Research suggests a strong genetic component, strengthened by biochemical processes in the gut and the brain. Eating disorders and substance abuse also share several common risk factors, including brain chemistry, family history, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and social pressures. Other shared characteristics include compulsive behavior, impulsivity, social isolation, and risk for suicide.

If you have a substance abuse problem as well as binge eating disorder, it is important to understand how these issues relate to each other, as well as how they impact your overall quality of life. Substance abuse problems may begin before or during an eating disorder, or even following recovery. If you struggle with a substance use problem and binge eating disorder, it is important to speak with a trained professional who can understand, diagnose, and treat both issues.

What to Do

What substances are you using? Include how much and how often.

Put a check mark by each statement that you consider to be true.

- My drug or alcohol use often leads to overeating.
- I drink alcohol or use drugs because I dislike the way I look.
- I have tried unsuccessfully to stop using alcohol and/or drugs.
- I binge drink or get drunk, and I am unaware how much I eat.
- Drinking alcohol interferes with my ability to eat normally.

____ I skip meals so I can drink more alcohol, then find myself overeating later.

____ I am worried about my financial situation because I spend a lot on alcohol/drugs and food.

____ I am often embarrassed or ashamed of my behavior after a night of bingeing.

Reflections on This Exercise

Of the statements you checked off, which is the biggest problem for you?

Do you use drugs or alcohol to deal with difficult situations or emotions? Describe.

Discuss how your substance use supports or encourages your eating problems.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Section 2. Self-Monitoring

In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or to step back into safety. *Abraham Maslow*

Practice Establishing Healthy Eating Habits

Objective

To practice healthy eating habits by doing a one-day eating experiment.

You Should Know

As you reduce overeating and eliminate bingeing episodes, you might be surprised by a lingering sense of eating insecurity or stress around food. Sometimes you might even worry that you will lose control and binge.

So, it might be challenging and at times frustrating to establish healthy eating habits. If you have been overeating or bingeing for a long time, it can make the process of establishing a healthy diet difficult.

Here are some general tips for healthy eating.

- Eat when you are hungry and stop when you feel satisfied, with the goal of eating every 3–4 hours, 3 meals, and 2–3 snacks each day.
- Make non-emotional decisions about what to eat.
- Plan your meals so that you have some structure around eating. This can help reduce some of the fear around food and eating.
- Give thought to your food selections so that you eat nutritious food but are not so restrictive that you miss out on foods you enjoy.
- Leave some food on your plate because you know you can eat more at a later time.
- Trust your body’s hunger and satiety cues.
- Meal planning, food preparation, and eating take up some of your time and attention, but keep their place as only one of many significant parts of your life.
- Meals and snacks are a balance of all different food groups—protein, starches, vegetables, and fats, as well as vitamins and minerals. Always try to include foods that you enjoy in your meals.
- Avoid creating a “forbidden foods” list, but early in treatment it might be a good idea to keep trigger foods out of the house. Enjoy them when you are less likely to overdo it.

- As you make progress in treatment, begin to allow yourself to eat a wide variety of foods. If you have “forbidden foods” you might experience cravings, potentially leading to a relapse.

This worksheet will help you establish healthy eating habits to reduce and eventually eliminate overeating and bingeing.

What to Do

Make a list of 10–15 nutritious and enjoyable foods, combining protein, healthy fat, and carbohydrates that you are not likely to binge or overeat. You will stay fuller for longer if you include protein (found in meat, beans, dairy) with fiber (found in whole grains, vegetables, fruit, and legumes) at every meal and snack.

Note: *You might want to seek the advice of a registered dietitian or certified nutritionist who has experience working with people struggling to overcome compulsive overeating and binge eating.* Write down some of the struggles or challenges you are experiencing as you create a healthy eating plan.

Once you have created a healthy eating food plan, complete a one-day experiment. Commit to following your plan for just one day. At the end of the day, note if you overate.

Date: _____

Meal	Time/ Place	What Are You Planning to Eat?	Overeat or Binge?
<i>Ex. Lunch</i>	<i>12:30/ Work</i>	<i>Cup of vegetable soup, turkey sandwich, water</i>	<i>I didn't overeat but I felt full.</i>

Reflections on This Exercise

Discuss your one-day experiment. Was it challenging to stick with your plan? Did you overeat or binge? Describe.

Describe any fears you have about implementing healthy eating habits?

When you tried the one-day experiment, how did you feel (e.g., bored, frustrated, stressed, relieved, etc.)?

What specifically did you find challenging about meal planning or sticking to the experiment?

What did you like about the one-day experiment?

Describe the tools and resources you can use to integrate healthy eating into your daily life.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what you learned from this exercise.

Meal Planning to Eliminate Binge Eating

Objective

To identify basic strategies to normalize long-term eating habits through meal planning.

You Should Know

Planning meals can be challenging if you are changing how and when you eat. There are some basic guidelines you can follow when you are planning what to eat so that you no longer feel compelled to binge eat.

Meal planning is working for you when you achieve the following goals:

1. You consistently check in with how your body feels (e.g., you can accurately assess if you are hungry or satisfied).
2. You feel hungry at regular meal or snack times.
3. You rarely feel 'starving' or overly hungry before meals.
4. You have healthy digestion; in other words, you do not experience constipation, bloating, or excessive gas.
5. You do not feel sluggish, develop headaches, or have other symptoms between meals.
6. You feel energized and you think clearly.
7. You are less irritable and rarely experience mood swings.
8. You rarely experience intense food cravings.
9. Your desire to binge is reduced or eliminated.

Begin at the most basic level when you begin meal planning. The first step is to follow these guidelines for one week.

- Schedule specific times for each meal and eat at about the same time every day.
- Eat three meals and two snacks every day.
- Include all three macronutrients in each meal and snack: protein, healthy fat, and carbohydrates.
- Drink 8–10 cups of water each day.
- Move your body at least once each day, even if it is only a 10-minute walk.

Changes in your eating habits might take months. You might want to consult with a registered dietitian, certified nutritionist, or nutrition coach for support. Making small, sustainable changes is more effective over the long term than attempting major, sweeping changes. This

worksheet will help you plan what you will be eating each day. Make several copies and plan your meals on the same day each week (for example, every Sunday evening). This habit will help you track your meals and remain accountable to yourself.

What to Do

First, plan your meals for the upcoming week. Choose meals and snacks that nourish your body and mind. For now, avoid foods that might trigger overeating or bingeing episodes. Also, avoid strictly counting calories. Make several copies of the following chart or use a notebook to track your meals.

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack 1	Snack 2
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

Next, record your progress. For each day rate yourself from 1 = I wasn't able to meet my goals, to 5 = I met all my goals. Copy this chart to track your progress each week.

Goals	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
Rating:							
I ate on schedule.							
I ate three meals.							
I ate two healthy snacks.							
I drank 8–10 cups of water or herbal tea.							
I engaged in at least 10 minutes of physical activity.							
I included protein, healthy fat, and carbs at each meal/snack.							
I abstained from bingeing and overeating.							
I practiced meditation or another mindfulness activity.							

Reflections on This Exercise

What additional tools or resources can you use for meal planning?

Which goals were most challenging for you to meet each day?

What can you do to make the meal planning process easier?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what you learned from this exercise.

Using a Food Log to Address Unhealthy Eating Habits

Objective

To use a self-monitoring food log to record daily food intake, thoughts, feelings, and unhealthy eating behaviors to sustain healthy habits.

You Should Know

Self-monitoring food logs are a tool used to treat all eating disorders. Some people like to jot things down in a notebook, while other people prefer to complete prepared charts. Another option is to enter daily information using a food consumption phone app.

Food logs do much more than track your food intake. The goal of self-monitoring is to support you in normalizing eating behavior over the long term, to improve your relationship with food, and to decrease unhealthy eating habits. You will not be completing food logs forever; this temporary tool will help you bridge the gap between eating in an automatic and habitual manner and eating mindfully.

You might resist the use of a food log. If you have ever been encouraged to complete a food log but had difficulty starting or committing to the process, it might help you to understand why food logs are an important part of treatment. Completing a food log offers insights into your current habits and communicates specific details about your daily food intake and emotions surrounding food and eating. You can observe patterns over the course of a week or month related to meal times, locations, hunger cues, triggers, emotions, and thoughts before and after eating. You can also track physical activity, as well as whether you binge or overeat. Food logs provide a way to monitor your progress. Over time, food logs will help you strengthen your hunger and satiety signals and control your eating—rather than food controlling you.

Consider the following points when you begin using your food log:

- Be as accurate and honest as possible. Do not omit food items or behaviors because you feel ashamed or guilty.
- Complete your food log immediately after eating to ensure accuracy. If you wait until the end of the day, it might be difficult to recall exactly what you consumed. If you are out and about, carry a small notebook to jot notes so that you can record the information in your log later.
- Avoid calorie counting. The goal of self-monitoring is not to add up your food intake at the end of the day or “count” calories or fat grams.

Reflections on This Exercise

How do you feel about recording your daily food consumption and eating behaviors? Describe your thoughts and feelings.

List some strategies to make tracking your food intake more manageable or less uncomfortable.

Look at the feelings or situations that you noted in your log. Describe whether or not they set you up for unhealthy eating choices.

Consider how you will fit self-monitoring into your life. For example, when you are eating with friends or family or when you are attending a party. Describe how you will manage social activities or food-centered events.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Mood and Symptoms Log

Objective

To track symptoms, moods, and triggers in order to reduce and eventually eliminate binge eating episodes.

You Should Know

The way you feel impacts the way you think, which affects your choices and experiences. It is important to keep track of behaviors or activities that trigger the urge to binge or overeat. Noting mood changes, and how you manage or cope with distress, allows you to see patterns. The more you understand what triggers you, the more you will be able to manage your choices. Use this worksheet to track your symptoms, moods, feelings, and triggers, as well as methods you use to cope. You can use your log to notice patterns over time. Combining this with your food log will offer a wealth of helpful information.

What to Do

Complete the following chart for one month and include Notes, where you can record lifestyle or medication changes. Rate your symptoms from 1 = Mild to 10 = Severe.

Date	Trigger	Symptoms	Mood/Feelings	How Did You Cope?	Notes

Accurately Identifying Your Body Cues

Objective

To understand and identify body cues that lead to overeating and bingeing.

You Should Know

Your body's physical sensations provide clues about what is happening in and around you. You might not always be aware of your body's cues, but your body reliably communicates signals to you regarding what you are feeling and whether a situation is safe or harmful. Your body will communicate what it requires to be healthy and feel good, for example, sleep, nutritious food, and relaxation. Your body will also tell you when to eat and when to stop eating.

If you have binge eating disorder, you might be disconnected from your body's signals or sensations, resulting in difficulty recognizing basic body cues. For example, if your body signals that you are full and you ignore the physical signs that it is time to stop eating, you are overriding a basic body cue. Similarly, if you are stressed or upset and you decide that you are hungry even when you are not, you are ignoring your body's cues.

Emotions are first experienced within your body. If you feel the urge to binge when you experience uncomfortable emotions, you might be confused about the physical sensations associated with your emotions, misidentifying them as hunger. Over time you can become completely disconnected from your body's signals and cues, and habitually confuse unpleasant feelings with hunger or the desire to eat. This can lead to you assuming that you are hungry whenever you are distressed.

You can learn to recognize situations where you have experienced unpleasant or uncomfortable emotions or feelings. When you connect your emotions with your body's cues, you can explore how you respond—and whether or not you choose disordered eating behavior. Over time your awareness of your body's cues, and corresponding emotions, will increase. This worksheet will help you connect your emotions with your body's physical sensations or cues.

What to Do

On the following chart you will find a list of emotions often associated with physical sensations. Imagine a situation when you felt a strong physical sensation along with uncomfortable emotions. How were you feeling? Elaborate on the emotion or feeling in the far-left column, and then record the situation, physical sensations or reactions, and resulting behaviors.

Emotion	Situation	Physical Sensations You Experienced	How Did You React?
<i>Ex: Anger</i>	<i>I was fired from my job.</i>	<i>My face flushed and my stomach felt queasy. My shoulders and jaw were tense.</i>	<i>I stopped by the store on the way home and bought a gallon of ice cream. I ate it when I arrived home.</i>
Fear			
Anger			
Guilt			
Hurt			
Shame			
Frustration			
Sadness			
Disgust			
Other:			

Reflections on This Exercise

Were you actually physically hungry in the situations you identified? If so, what were the body cues that signaled hunger? If not, did you confuse your physical sensations or emotions with hunger? Explain.

What emotions were most challenging for you to connect with physical sensations?

Describe the ways in which you sometimes misidentify or ignore your body's cues.

What can you do differently to make it easier to be aware of your body's cues and choose alternatives to overeating?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Including Triggering Foods in Your Healthy Eating Plan

Objective

To identify triggering foods and decrease your fear of bingeing by including them in your healthy eating plan.

You Should Know

You might think that recovering from binge eating disorder means that you must avoid certain foods forever. Sweet, fatty, or carbohydrate-rich foods can trigger binge eating, and if you are recovering from BED you might choose to limit your access to these 'risky' foods for a while. Healthy, normalized eating involves gradually including what you might consider to be risky, bad, or triggering foods into your healthy eating plan. These foods are typically ones that you avoid because you are afraid you will lose control if you eat them. Once you no longer experience the urge to binge, you might consider reintroducing risky or trigger foods.

However, as you progress through recovery, if you completely restrict risky foods from your diet you are more likely to relapse if you break your eating rules. Including normal servings of a variety of foods in a planned way will support you in feeling more in control. Dieting, cutting calories, or depriving yourself sets you up for a binge because you are more likely to end up bingeing on a food that you would have otherwise eaten in moderation.

There are several reasons you might include triggering foods in your diet:

1. Eating feared or triggering foods allows you to increase your flexibility.
2. Including foods you normally avoid because you are afraid they will trigger a binge allows you to practice eating them in a relaxed, pleasurable, and enjoyable way.
3. Completely avoiding trigger foods can increase your cravings and lead to overeating.
4. Over time, exposing yourself to feared foods and working through difficult or uncomfortable feelings will lessen your anxiety about eating those foods.
5. There are no good or bad foods. If you include most foods with balance and moderation you will have fewer negative thoughts when eating them, lessening your fear of overeating.
6. Reintroducing triggering foods allows you to determine your reasons for permanently removing them from your diet. You can then choose from personal preference and not from fear or the belief that a risky food automatically leads you to binge.
7. Making triggering foods entirely off-limits can lead to anxiety or even food phobias.

Eventually the goal is for you to be able to enjoy all foods in moderation, without feeling the urge to overeat or experiencing guilt or shame.

What to Do

First, write down the foods you tend to avoid because they trigger overeating. Risky or trigger foods are those you associate with loss of control, bingeing, or feelings of guilt or shame while eating them.

Recovery from binge eating disorder involves small changes that build on each other over time. If you are ready to include risky or trigger foods, try one food at a time during one meal or snack. These small, realistic, and manageable changes will support you in establishing and maintaining healthy eating habits.

Choose one food to include in your meal planning that you consider triggering (include portion size and other relevant details):

Choose a safe place to try this food (for example, in a public place or with a friend):

Choose a safe time (for example, try the food earlier in the day rather than late in the day to avoid overeating): _____

Plan an activity to engage in immediately after eating this food to prevent bingeing. What will you do, where, and with whom?

Describe your experience, including your reactions, physical sensations, and feelings.

Reflections on This Exercise

What thoughts or memories came up for you when you ate the trigger or risky food?

If you felt the urge to overeat, describe what that was like for you.

What can you do to decrease the uncomfortable feelings that you might have experienced?

Describe other tools or resources you can use to manage your feelings about including triggering foods in your diet.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Eating a Mindful Meal

Objective

To increase your enjoyment of food and decrease overeating by practicing mindful eating.

You Should Know

When is the last time you truly noticed what you were eating and what you were doing while you were eating? So much stress, so many responsibilities—it is easy to end up mindlessly inhaling your food while you sneak one more peek at your phone or simply rush toward the day’s finish line.

Eating delicious, healthy food is one of life’s greatest pleasures. Bringing mindful awareness to your food can enrich your day and bring you into the present moment. And, of course, it is better for your digestion and your health than wolfing down a slice of pizza on the run.

What to Do

This week, make a date with yourself to eat a meal mindfully, using all your senses. You do not have to be alone. If appropriate, ask your family to join you.

First, unplug. No phones, no TV, no music, no devices. Take a deep breath or two. Notice the silence. Notice what is happening in your body and your mind.

Before you even put anything in your mouth, notice the whole meal on the plate; notice the table, the room, and the present moment. Then, take yourself through the following steps.

- What does the food look like (appealing, unappealing, color, size)?
- How does it taste (hot, cold, salty, sweet, sour, spicy, bitter)?
- What is its texture (crunchy, smooth, creamy, hard)?
- How does it smell (pungent, mild, pleasant, unpleasant)?
- What sounds do you notice (utensils clinking, apple crunching)?

If eating an entire meal feels like a stretch, start slowly. Just take a few mindful bites of your food. The purpose is to experience your food mindfully. Record your experience below.

What did you eat?

What did it look like?

What did it taste like?

What was its texture?

What did it smell like?

What sounds did you notice?

What did you discover about your relationship to food or to your mealtime habits?

How did you feel doing this exercise? What was positive about it? What was challenging?

What goal(s) would you like to set in the coming weeks to experience more mindful eating? Be specific; for example, "Twice a week, I will eat my lunch mindfully," or "I will eat the first three bites of all meals with mindful awareness."

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what you learned from this exercise.

Section 3. Techniques to Stop Binge Eating

There ARE people who won't customarily eat an entire row of cookies, or hear food calling their name from other rooms, or who don't grind up food in the garbage disposal for fear of eating it, or get it back out of the garbage so they could eat it. Of course, my binge eating was just a cover-up for the larger issue: trying to fill the emptiness. *SARK*

Developing Problem-Solving Skills

Objective

To identify the steps you need to take to solve your eating-related problems.

You Should Know

One of the most serious consequences of binge eating disorder is the belief that your eating problems are beyond your control and will never get better. But most problems can be addressed by identifying the steps necessary to solve them. There are six steps to the problem-solving process.

1. Define the problem. Ask yourself the following questions:

How often does the problem occur? _____

When does it occur? _____

When doesn't it occur? _____

Where does it occur most often? _____

Who tends to be involved with the problem? _____

- 2. Identify the causes of the problem.
- 3. Brainstorm possible solutions. Be creative and combine, refine, and build on your ideas.
- 4. Select the most appropriate solutions.
- 5. Implement the plan. Develop a plan, including how your progress will be monitored.
- 6. Follow-up, evaluate, and monitor your progress.

Of course, not every problem can be solved in a straightforward manner. Sometimes you have to change the steps you take for problem resolution. Sometimes there are unforeseen obstacles, and many times motivation is a problem. Change is sometimes hard. But, writing down the steps to solve your problems is an important part of the process of eliminating binge eating.

This worksheet will help you develop your problem-solving skills and identify the required steps to overcome binge eating disorder.

What to Do

Referring back to the previous page, define the problem you would like to focus on for this exercise.

What are the causes or triggers?

What or who contributes to the problem?

Next, use the following chart to outline possible solutions to the problem, listing advantages and disadvantages to each solution.

Possible Solutions	Advantages	Disadvantages

Break down the problem into steps you can take to resolve the problem. When you break down your problem into small incremental steps, problem-solving is easier to achieve. Make copies of this chart for each problem you identify.

Steps to Take to Resolve Problem	Who Can Support You?	Additional Resources You Can Use	Target Date	Date Completed

Describe obstacles you may experience as you resolve your problem. What are some ways you can address these obstacles?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Practicing Delay and Identifying Alternative Actions

Objective

To identify alternative actions to decrease and eventually eliminate binge eating episodes.

You Should Know

Sometimes you might have the urge to binge eat after experiencing uncomfortable or unpleasant feelings. During the time when your urge is increasing it might feel like it will never end. However, as times passes, your uncomfortable feelings and urges will gradually subside on their own. If you surrender at the point when you feel most distressed, you might immediately feel temporary relief. You might not realize that your distress would have subsided on its own without binge eating. Repeatedly responding to the urge reinforces your belief that bingeing is the only way to feel better. You might believe that it is out of your control because it has become an automatic habit. Behavioral reinforcement leads you to repeat the unhealthy behavior whenever you experience uncomfortable or distressing emotions or urges. When you notice a surge in emotion and choose an alternative action, you delay bingeing and manage your feelings in other ways. Delay works best when paired with an alternative activity or coping skill.

It is helpful to develop a list of alternative behaviors that you can choose. It is best to pick an activity that is incompatible with binge eating. Here is a list of potential alternative actions that are distracting and/or soothing.

- Calling a friend, mentor, or family member.
- Listening to a guided meditation or soothing music.
- Practicing yoga.
- Taking a bath or shower.
- Getting a manicure or pedicure.
- Lighting a scented candle or using essential oils.
- Knitting, crocheting, beadwork, painting, or other craft activities.
- Pinning on Pinterest or reviewing social media.
- Playing video games or completing a puzzle.
- Going for a walk or playing with a pet.

Practicing alternative actions is an important tool in recovery from binge eating disorder. Choosing delay and alternative actions takes practice and effort at first. Every time you choose delay and an alternative action, you are increasingly able to tolerate distress. Over time, it will become easier and eventually you will form healthier habits. This worksheet will help you resist

your urge to binge eat and better cope with uncomfortable feelings by choosing alternative actions.

What to Do

It is helpful to keep a record of your use of delay and alternative actions so that you can see what works for you. Keeping a record allows you to choose alternative actions so you feel in control of your behavior. Use this log to make connections between your uncomfortable feelings and choices.

Trigger <i>Emotional, physical, interpersonal, situational</i>	Describe What Happened	Emotions <i>How did I feel?</i>	Short-Term Solution <i>What do I want to do now to make myself feel better?</i>	Long-Term Consequence <i>How will that make me feel later?</i>	Alternative Behavior <i>What else can I do to make myself feel better?</i>

Reflections on This Exercise

Describe obstacles or challenges you experienced while completing this exercise.

Referring back to the chart, describe your top three alternative activities.

Describe what you can do to delay your urges and ensure you avoid overeating while choosing an alternative activity.

What other tools or resources can you use to delay and eventually eliminate bingeing episodes?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Developing Skills to Cope with Bingeing and Overeating

Objective

To identify skills and strategies to cope with the urge to overeat or compulsively eat when distressed.

You Should Know

Eating when you are not hungry is one way of coping with discomfort or upset. You might also overeat to avoid boredom, depression, anxiety, loneliness, stress, or other unpleasant emotions. Sometimes the foods you crave during distressing times are comfort foods your caregivers used to soothe you when you were a child. An important way to decrease overeating is to recognize when you have automatic reactions and identify the difference between the need to eat and the desire to eat because you are upset. You can then choose alternatives to overeating.

Sometimes people, things, or situations trigger you. If you are aware of your triggers, you will recognize when you are vulnerable to eating for reasons other than hunger. When you feel the urge to overeat or binge, ask yourself the following questions.

- Am I actually physically hungry?
- Am I upset or distressed?
- Am I stressed or frustrated?
- How will I feel after bingeing?
- Is the food I plan to eat nourishing to my body?

After answering these questions, you might realize that you have the urge to binge—even though you are not hungry. You can use these simple strategies to overcome your urge to overeat.

- Before you eat, drink a glass of water and wait 10 minutes.
- Avoid eating while watching TV.
- Eat every few hours so that you're never "starving."
- Have healthy food on hand at home. Don't stock up on junk food.
- Plan healthy snacks for those times when you are vulnerable to overeating.
- Decide what you can do other than eating, for example, walking your dog, watching a movie, gardening, or riding your bike around the block. If you distract yourself the urge to eat will often pass.
- Engage in physical activity before dinner to relieve stress before you eat.

What to Do

Bingeing and compulsive overeating can occur when you are distressed or experiencing other uncomfortable feelings. Review the examples and rate your level of distress using a scale from 1–10, with 1 = Not at all upset (relaxed and calm), to 10 = Very upset (you feel like you might explode).

	Coping Skills	Distress rating before practicing skill (0–10)	Distress rating after practicing skill (0–10)	Situation	Comments
Monday	<i>Call a friend to chat. Take a walk.</i>	8	5	<i>Urge to binge on ice cream after a stressful day at work.</i>	<i>I hate my job.</i>
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you learn about yourself during this exercise?

What are your triggers for overeating or compulsive bingeing?

What coping strategies did you identify during this exercise?

What else can you do to cope with distress and avoid overeating? Are there other tools or resources you can use to delay or avoid a binge episode?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Eliminating Night Overeating

Objective

To eliminate late-evening and nighttime overeating and binge episodes.

You Should Know

Do you often wake up for a midnight snack? Do you regularly eat a lot of food following your evening meal? If you have binge eating disorder, you might find that you wake up and eat to soothe your insomnia and fall back asleep. Stress, anxiety, or feeling “too full” can make you toss and turn at night. Depression might cause you to overeat to numb your feelings, cope with exhaustion, or relieve stress after a long day. According to research, if you eat at night, you are more likely to feel depressed at night. Even if you are not suffering from depression, you might overeat at night because it has become a habit to deal with frustration, loneliness, anxiety, or boredom. If you wake up and overeat at night, you might experience the following problems:

- Waking up several times a night.
- Digestive issues that interrupt your sleep.
- Sleeping too little.
- Feeling sleepy during the day.

What can you do to stop overeating at night? Check off any of the following suggestions that might help you avoid night eating:

- Stick to scheduled daytime meal and snack times.
- Avoid strict “food rules,” such as, “I’m not going to eat anything after 6:00 p.m.”
- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.
- Avoid skipping meals during the day to “save up” calories to overeat at night. If you deprive yourself during the day, at night you may end up overtired, hungry, and desiring a reward.
- If you are hungry at night—eat. Just avoid overeating. It is a myth that food consumed at night puts on more weight than the same food eaten earlier in the day.
- Break associations. If you typically eat while watching TV or scrolling through social media, either eat a healthy snack or avoid mindless eating altogether.
- Remove triggering foods from your home that will tempt you when you are exhausted.
- When you feel the urge to overeat, take a 5- to 10-minute pause—breathe, stretch, or write in your journal.
- Hang positive affirmations or a “STOP” sign on your refrigerator.
- If you feel the need to reward yourself at night, especially after a stressful day, reward yourself with non-food pleasures.

This worksheet will help you wake up each morning free of the guilt, shame, or self-loathing that often accompanies late-evening and overnight overeating.

What You Should Do

First, explore why you overeat at night or wake up from a deep sleep and have the urge to overeat.

Complete the following chart for one week. Record all food consumed after 8:00 p.m., including overnight. Rate how difficult it was to avoid bingeing, where 1 = It was easy to distract myself and avoid overeating, to 10 = It was impossible to avoid bingeing and I gave in to my urges. Then, answer the following questions.

Day	Overeat or binge after 8:00 p.m.? Y / N	What triggered your desire to overeat or binge?	What did you do to avoid or stop overeating?	Rating (1-10)
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				

Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you find most challenging about avoiding night overeating or bingeing?

What were the most common nighttime triggers for you?

What else can you do to reduce or eliminate night overeating and bingeing?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Identifying and Overcoming Obstacles to Exercise

Objective

To identify potential obstacles to healthy physical activity and explore ways to overcome those obstacles.

You Should Know

You are probably aware that there are numerous health benefits gained from physical activity. Not only will you reduce your risk of disease, you will also improve your quality of life because physical activity makes your body feel good and improves your mood. Research indicates that the pleasure experienced while exercising may be one of the most important factors for sustaining an active lifestyle.

Even if you personally value the benefits of physical activity and have a genuine desire to remain active throughout your life, you might face obstacles to creating a routine that works for you. Sticking to a regular exercise schedule can be challenging because there are plenty of potential barriers—time constraints, boredom, injuries, or lack of confidence are just a few.

Instead of allowing obstacles to stop you, consider a few of these strategies for overcoming common barriers to fitness:

- Engage in shorter bursts of exercise multiple times each day (e.g., walking for 10 minutes three times/day, three days per week). Build up to exercising 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Wake up 30 minutes earlier to exercise.
- Drive less and walk or ride your bicycle more often.
- Choose activities you enjoy and vary the routine.
- Exercise with friends, relatives, neighbors, or co-workers.
- If you're uncomfortable exercising around other people, exercise alone at first. You do not need to join a gym to exercise.
- Be prepared. Make sure you have comfortable shoes and exercise clothing available.
- Set realistic goals and expectations. If you set your goals too high, you might give up and consider yourself a failure.
- Schedule exercise as you would schedule any important appointment.
- Try an exercise class for beginners. Take it slow and learn the basics.

This worksheet will help you identify obstacles you might face when adding exercise to your daily routine. Then you can identify strategies to overcome them so that you can make physical activity a regular part of your day.

What to Do

Identifying common obstacles to physical activity will allow you to find strategies to overcome them. Read the following statements and mark the most appropriate response. Then answer the following questions.

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely/ Never
I lack confidence about my ability to exercise.				
I don't have appropriate workout attire.				
I am too tired to exercise.				
I am afraid of being injured.				
I have an injury that keeps me from being physically active.				
The weather affects my ability to exercise outside.				
I have little free time to myself due to family obligations.				
My job requires a lot of travel.				
I work so much that I have no time to fit in physical activity.				
I set unrealistic goals, then just give up.				
I only exercise if I am starting a new diet.				

Losing weight is the only reason I would choose to exercise.				
I believe that physical activity only “counts” if I sweat a lot and burn lots of calories.				
I am just too heavy to exercise.				
If I overeat my attitude is, “What is the point of working out?”				
I have been forced to exercise to lose weight.				
As a child I was the last one picked for teams because I was overweight, awkward, or uncoordinated.				
As a child I was teased for being overweight.				
Exercise was used as a punishment when I was young (e.g., I was forced to run laps or do push-ups).				
Physical activity is painful and I want to avoid feeling sore.				
I am bored when I exercise.				
There are no parks, sidewalks, bicycle trails, or safe and pleasant walking paths convenient to my home or office.				
I can’t afford to join a gym or hire a personal trainer.				
I don’t know where to start—I lack skills and/or knowledge.				
I have tried exercise in the past and failed.				

Reflections on This Exercise

List the top three obstacles to exercise that you identified above.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In the space below, describe what you can do to overcome those obstacles.

What else can you do to make healthy physical activity a priority in your life? List the people or resources that might support you.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Managing Your Emotions to Avoid Binge Eating

Objective

To identify techniques to manage your emotions when you feel the urge to overeat or binge.

You Should Know

You might overeat to cope with intense and painful emotions. Emotions can seem like “problems” for which there must be an easy solution. If you have not identified ways to cope with uncomfortable feelings such as sadness or anger, your emotions can take charge and you may become reactive, defensive, or overwhelmed. You might binge eat to temporarily decrease your uncomfortable feelings.

Uncomfortable emotions might include sadness, hopelessness, anger, loneliness, stress, boredom, grief, or shame. Sometimes when you experience these feelings, they can seem overwhelming and impossible to bear. You might make choices without considering the consequences of what you are doing. In the moment, you are simply concerned with relieving the discomfort caused by your feelings.

There are many ways to cope with painful emotions. You might soothe and repress your discomfort through bingeing. You might then project your emotions on to your body; “feeling bad” becomes “feeling fat,” and you experience embarrassment, shame, or guilt.

Identifying and managing your feelings in a healthy way can reduce your risk of engaging in unhealthy eating habits. Over time, your self-confidence will be boosted and you will feel secure knowing that you can handle your emotions without resorting to overeating. You will no longer be afraid of uncomfortable emotions because you will be prepared to deal with them when they come up.

Research indicates that setbacks or relapses often occur because of the inability to cope with distress. If you lack healthy ways to manage your emotions, you might fall back into old patterns and habits. Identifying ways to manage your emotions is an important element of recovery; instead of feeling controlled by your feelings, you will feel calm, grounded, and aware. Most importantly, you will avoid relapse and maintain your recovery goals. This worksheet will help you identify when you have trouble managing your emotions, and then explore alternatives to binge eating to manage distress.

What to Do

Rate yourself on the following statements. Use the scale 1 = Don't agree at all, to 10 = Strongly agree. Then answer the questions below.

- _____ Sometimes I can't sleep because I am so upset, so I get something to eat.
- _____ People tell me that I am moody, especially when I have not eaten.
- _____ I can't forget when "bad" things happen and I review events repeatedly in my mind.
- _____ I am anxious and experience physical symptoms, which are soothed through eating.
- _____ I get caught up in stories and repeatedly tell people what has happened to me.
- _____ I have trouble focusing on anything else besides my upset.
- _____ I get so worked up and I can't calm myself, so I eat to soothe myself.
- _____ I treat myself after a difficult day at work or school.
- _____ My life feels really chaotic and drama seems to be a constant force in my life.
- _____ Life is usually really overwhelming for me; I just don't know how to manage everything.
- _____ I often "treat" myself on the way home. I stop for fast food or purchase junk foods.
- _____ I often eat in the middle of the night.
- _____ When I'm upset, I eat to calm myself down.
- _____ I can't stand to be alone, and I often eat to soothe my feelings of loneliness.
- _____ People always seem to criticize me; I can never do anything right.
- _____ It seems like I spend most of my day worrying about food and when I can eat.
- _____ I always feel stressed out and find myself eating sweets.

List the top four situations when you have difficulty managing your emotions and choose eating to soothe yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Now, think of alternative behaviors you can choose when you are overcome by your emotions other than overeating. Here are some ideas, and you can include your own. Check off the ideas that might work for you.

- Call your therapist, mentor, coach, friend, or family member.
- Use meditation or grounding techniques.
- Write in your journal.
- Engage in an artistic activity, such as crafting, painting, or drawing.
- Recite positive affirmations or listen to calming mp3 recordings.
- Listen to music or attend a concert.
- Play with your pet or take your dog for a walk.
- Exercise or take a leisurely walk.

Other ideas:

Choose one activity to engage in when you feel the urge to overeat:

The next time you are upset and you want to binge eat, do the activity indicated above. What happened?

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you learn about yourself during this exercise?

What other tools or resources can you identify to better manage your emotions?

Describe the consequences of allowing your emotions to take control.

Describe challenges you have to successfully managing your emotions.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn about yourself during this exercise?

Coping with Shame and Guilt

Objective

To reduce the shame and guilt associated with binge eating disorder.

You Should Know

After you overeat or binge, you might feel intense shame or guilt. Shame is a painful and uncomfortable feeling, and if you are feeling shame, you may not focus on problematic behavior, but instead think, “I am wrong,” or “I am disgusting,” or even “I am broken.” Shame has been described as an intensely painful feeling that you are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging. Guilt is, “I did something wrong,” versus shame, which is, “I am wrong.” Shame often feels powerful and ingrained, and it feels awful because shame means that not only have you done something wrong — you ARE wrong.

Shame can be triggered in many ways, but the problem with bingeing as a way to cope with shame is that binge eating actually perpetuates the cycle of shame. After bingeing, you might feel shame if you eat certain foods. You might not eat triggering foods in public because you feel shame and guilt when you consume these foods in front of other people. You might feel like you have no control when you eat those foods. Binge eating might temporarily help you avoid or escape negative memories or feelings of shame and guilt, but overeating actually increases feelings of shame, guilt, and distress—continuously perpetuating the cycle.

Shaming yourself after you have binged might work in the short term, but long-term shaming may lead to secrecy, guilt, fear, and intense dissatisfaction with yourself—leading to further bingeing. In order to decrease the frequency of binge episodes, adopt a self-compassionate approach to yourself instead.

Adopting self-compassion toward yourself, your body, and your eating disorder will help you shift and change the shame/guilt patterns. This may not be easy, and it will probably not feel natural. The goal is to begin to change disordered eating habits and negative self-talk that strengthens shame and guilt.

Here are some ways you can practice channeling shame and guilt into self-compassion:

- Instead of judging your body, take a neutral attitude and notice how your body works, how it functions, and what it does for you. Even if you do not like your body, try not to judge yourself. Changing the self-shaming and negative way you talk to yourself will help you make peace with your body.
- Ask yourself, how would you speak to a friend? Observe how you talk to yourself daily, and notice if you tend to use harsh self-talk.

- Practice mindfulness. Simply be mindful of where your thoughts tend to go, and choose to be non-judgmental about your thoughts.
- Use exposure. Do the opposite of what your “shame” wants you to do by challenging it. If your “shame” is telling you to isolate and hide because you are disgusting and no one likes you, do the opposite and make plans with friends. If you have previously only eaten your trigger foods in bed, do the opposite and consume trigger foods in a public space with friends or family.

This worksheet is designed to help you reduce your feelings of shame and guilt by considering what supports unhealthy eating habits and identifying ways to channel shame and guilt into self-compassion.

What to Do

Describe a situation where you felt shame and guilt, and the resulting disordered eating behavior.

Describe factors that contributed to the situation.

List three ways that shame and guilt contribute to overeating.

Compassion is the ability to show empathy, love, and concern to others, and self-compassion is simply the ability to direct these same emotions to yourself, accepting yourself unconditionally.

Using the tools described above, list ways you can channel your shame into self-compassion.

What else can you do to cope with your feelings of shame and guilt?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Coping with Grief and Loss as You Recover

Objective

To identify and cope with grief while recovering from binge eating disorder.

You Should Know

As you recover from binge eating disorder, you might experience a feeling of loss or grief. Bingeing has likely become part of your routine, a habitual response that has shaped your identity. Bingeing might be the primary way that you have coped with uncomfortable emotions. The process of recovery can feel unfamiliar and uncomfortable. It is common to experience fear, shame, longing, vulnerability, anger, and sadness as you focus on changing your bingeing behaviors.

As you deal with the end of your disordered eating habits, you might be grieving the loss of the part of you that maintained safety and coping mechanisms to manage your life. Experiencing grief during recovery is normal, because many physical, mental, and emotional changes occur during recovery as you restore your health. Bingeing served a purpose for you, even though ultimately it was damaging to your health and well-being.

The first step is to identify that a loss has occurred and become aware of the emotions you might be feeling associated with grieving. Please remember that grief is a normal, natural, emotional reaction to any loss. As you experience the grieving process, you will learn new ways to take care of yourself and manage your life without your eating disorder. You will eventually identify new ways to cope with triggers, stress, anxiety, and depression. You will discover ways to care for and nurture yourself. You will focus on letting go of unhealthy thoughts, coping skills, and behaviors. A new normal begins during recovery. Becoming aware of and processing your grief is one important part of this process.

What to Do

As a starting point to address and process your grief, consider what it means for you to recover from your eating disorder. Rate yourself on the following statements. Use the scale 1 = Don't agree at all, to 10 = Strongly agree. Then answer the questions below.

____ I will lose my sense of safety and security that I feel with my eating disorder.

____ I am afraid other people will expect too much of me.

____ I will have to face and manage uncomfortable feelings: anger, loneliness, sadness, anxiety.

____ I am afraid other people will comment on my body and eating habits.

____ Recovery goes against what feels natural to me.

- ___ I am losing my main distraction from challenging aspects of my life.
- ___ I feel vulnerable and uncomfortable.
- ___ I will have to face and manage my responsibilities and problems.
- ___ I am afraid I will lose relationships.
- ___ I feel like I have failed.
- ___ I don't know how to cultivate a sense of self-worth or achievement.
- ___ I feel out of control.
- ___ No one will take care of me if I don't have an eating disorder.
- ___ I am losing a part of myself or my identity.
- ___ I am afraid I won't be able to numb my emotions anymore.
- ___ I am terrified of gaining more weight and feeling uncomfortable in my body.
- ___ I am afraid I will be unable to lose excess weight.
- ___ I am losing the only way I know to cope with my emotions and stress.

Add up your score: _____

If you scored between 18–50, grief might not be a factor for you as you recover from binge eating disorder.

If you scored between 51–110, grief might be an issue that you want to address as you recover.

If you scored *more than* 111 points, grief is playing a major part in your recovery and you will want to address this with your counselor, mentor, or therapist.

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you learn about your experience of grief and loss during this exercise?

What does it mean for you if you no longer binge eat?

What do you miss the most now that you have started recovering from your eating disorder?

List tools or resources you can use to cope with the loss of your habitual way to cope (overeating and bingeing).

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Mindful Self-Awareness Techniques to Decrease Bingeing Episodes

Objective

To identify and practice self-awareness techniques to decrease and eventually eliminate overeating and bingeing.

You Should Know

Mindful self-awareness refers to a clear recognition of your strengths and weaknesses, your thoughts and beliefs, your emotions and your motivations. You are aware of yourself and others, and you are focusing on the present moment. The practice of mindful self-awareness is particularly important as you recover, because it is easy to fall back into the distorted thinking that supports your eating disorder. To help you avoid setbacks or relapse, you will have the skills to stop and consciously redirect your thoughts and behaviors.

There are several ways to practice mindful self-awareness:

- 1. Using Your Five Senses.** Focusing on your senses is a present-moment activity that increases mindfulness. Practice using your senses during everyday activities (sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch). Start with alternating your attention to different senses and notice the sensations you are experiencing.
- 2. Thought Observation.** Sit with your eyes closed and notice each thought or feeling that comes up. Watch your thoughts as they are carried away with the breeze. Notice and experience your breathing.
- 3. Object Focus.** Focus on a single object for several minutes. Notice the details of the object and pay attention to when your mind wanders.
- 4. Diaphragmatic Breathing.** Breathe deeply to initiate a calming response. Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach. Breathe in slowly through your nose. Hold for four seconds, then slowly breathe out through your mouth. Repeat seven times.
- 5. Progressive Muscle Relaxation.** Lie down and close your eyes. Tighten and release the various muscle groups in your body for five seconds, starting with your forehead and moving down to your toes. Notice the tension as it leaves your body.
- 6. Guided Imagery.** Identify a guided imagery recording that you can use (there are many available on YouTube), close your eyes, and imagine the relaxing environment in detail. Engage all of your senses.

By practicing mindful self-awareness using the above exercises, you can shift negative or distorted thoughts, relax your mind and your body, and take responsibility for your emotions. This worksheet will help you identify which activities work best for you and allow you to practice mindful self-awareness.

What to Do

Practice each technique and reflect on what you notice. Mindful self-awareness takes time and practice, and some techniques may work better for you than others. Rate the technique from 1 = This didn't work for me at all, to 10 = I love this technique and plan to practice at least once per day. Then, answer the questions that follow.

Technique	When and Where?	Length of Practice	Sensations You Noticed	Rate the Technique (1-10)
Using Your Five Senses				
Thought Observation				
Object Focus				

Diaphragmatic Breathing				
Progressive Muscle Relaxation				
Guided Imagery				

Reflections on This Exercise

Which techniques did you enjoy the most? Explain.

What thoughts or feelings did you experience while practicing the techniques?

Did you find any of the techniques challenging? Discuss the reasons why.

Describe other mindful self-awareness techniques to support your recovery.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what you learned from this exercise.

Checking Behaviors and Overconcern About Shape and Weight

Objective

To keep a log of checking behaviors in order to track how often you engage in checking behaviors.

You Should Know

How do you think and feel about your body? Your perceptions of your body might vary, and might depend on how your clothes fit or the number you see on the scale. Negative feelings about your body might also occur in response to overeating or in response to daily stressors. Concerns about your body might lead to some form of checking behavior.

You might engage in body checking, which refers to obsessive thoughts and behaviors about physical appearance. You might frequently weigh yourself, look in mirrors or other reflective surfaces, and pinch or wrap your hands around your stomach, waist, thighs, or arms. You might obsessively measure your body parts. Or you may ask others for reassurance: "Do I look fat?" or "Do I look any bigger?" You might do this hundreds of times each day! The reassurance you feel is temporary, because you soon feel anxiety or fear again.

You probably have not given much thought to how overconcern with your weight and shape affects your thoughts, feelings, or behavior. Once you become aware of your checking behaviors, you might notice the negative effect on your mood, self-perceptions, and choices—leading to overeating or even bingeing. You might be aware that checking does not make you feel better about your body; instead, this behavior supports the continuation of unhealthy eating habits.

This worksheet will help you track your checking behaviors and associated thoughts and feelings.

What to Do

Record your body-checking behaviors on the following chart over the next two weeks. Make a tally mark each time you engage in the behavior. Record the thoughts and feelings associated with your checking behaviors. Once you collect information about your body-checking behaviors, you can begin to explore how this behavior contributes to your eating disorder.

Reflections on This Exercise

Record how you felt when you were engaging in checking behaviors.

Which checking behavior did you practice the most? _____

Did you binge or overeat after you engaged in the checking behavior? Describe what happened.

What are some tools or techniques you can use to reduce or eliminate checking behaviors?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what you learned from this exercise.

Increasing Distress Tolerance During Recovery

Objective

To identify distracting activities to increase distress tolerance during binge eating disorder recovery.

You Should Know

Distress can be difficult to tolerate, especially for people in recovery from eating disorders. When you feel upset or distressed, you might automatically react without considering the consequences. If you have an eating disorder, you might use unhelpful and often self-destructive behaviors to help you cope, including overeating. If you choose self-destructive behaviors to cope with your distress, you might believe you have failed or you are a “screw up.” You can learn skills to cope with distress so that you feel better about yourself instead of falling into a vicious cycle of bingeing and beating yourself up.

Distress tolerance skills can be used when you are unable to change a situation. Distress tolerance skills are used to help you cope, as well as tolerate short-term discomfort.

These are the specific skills you can use to increase your distress tolerance.

1. **Pros and Cons List.** Analyze the current situation by making a list of the different ways the overeating does and does not serve you as a means of coping with the situation.
2. **Present-Moment Activity.** There are activities that you can engage in that will bring you into the present moment and connect your mind with your body, including guided imagery, meditation, prayer, and relaxation techniques. Use these techniques to shift your awareness away from your distress.
3. **Self-Soothing.** Learning to self-soothe is an important part of learning to love yourself. This technique involves engaging all five senses. For example, you might add essential oils to your bubble bath. Light candles and play soothing music to engage all of your senses.
4. **Distraction.** Intentionally use distraction to interrupt the negative stimuli and emotionally charged thoughts that can lead to setbacks or relapse. This worksheet will assist you in identifying specific ways to distract yourself.

Distraction helps you feel better by diverting your attention away from the distressing thoughts that previously might have resulted in binge eating. Different activities work for different people. This exercise will assist you in identifying which distracting activities will work for you while you are recovering from binge eating disorder.

What to Do

Check off the activities that you are willing to try, then answer the following questions.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch a movie | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music | <input type="checkbox"/> Mow the lawn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read | <input type="checkbox"/> Call a friend or family member | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a walk or exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a bath/shower | <input type="checkbox"/> Check email/write a letter | <input type="checkbox"/> Declutter or clean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Journal or write | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditate/practice yoga | <input type="checkbox"/> Garden |

Describe other distracting activities.

Choose at least two of the above activities to engage in each day for one week. Rate your level of distress before the distracting activity and immediately after, using the scale where 1 = Relaxed and calm, to 10 = Very upset. If you find that an activity doesn't work for you, try another.

	Situation	Distress Rating	Activity	Distress Rating	Notes
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					

Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

Reflections on This Exercise

What distracting activities work best for you?

Describe the situation that you found most distressing or challenging.

Were you able to distract yourself in order to avoid overeating or bingeing? Describe.

What other techniques did you use to cope or make yourself feel better?

How will learning to tolerate distress help you reduce or eliminate binge eating episodes?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Using a Contract to Commit to Change

Objective

To create a contract to commit to changes that will help you overcome binge eating disorder.

You Should Know

A behavior contract outlines the steps necessary to overcome binge eating disorder. Not only will the contract hold you accountable, but it will provide structure, routine, consistency, and organization of the steps required to reduce and eventually eliminate binge eating.

Your contract might include the following information:

1. Target weight—determine the weight range at which you optimally function.
2. Accountability—decide who will review your food logs and provide ongoing support.
3. Follow-up plan—might include your therapist, dietitian, medical doctor, or mentor.
4. Frequency of counseling or group sessions.
5. Steps to take if you experience setbacks, slips, or relapses.

What to Do

Fill in the contract below to commit yourself to changes that will help you overcome binge eating disorder.

I, _____ (*name*), agree to

(*specific behaviors you want to change*) _____

I will begin on (*date*) _____ and plan to reach my goal by (*target date*) _____.

Goal: _____.

In order to reach my final goal, I have devised the following schedule of sub-goals:

Sub-Goal _____ Completion Date _____

I sign this contract as an indication of my personal commitment to reaching my goal.

(your signature)

(date)

I have recruited _____, a support person who will witness my contract and help me by:

(witness's signature)

(date)

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Describe what you could do differently to make progress in this area.

Describe what you could do differently to make progress in this area.

Section 4. Relapse Prevention

Eating disorder recovery becomes possible when you keep making the next right decision over and over. With time, these decisions become automatic. *Brittany Burgunder*

Controlling Your Urges

Objective

To control your urge to overeat and binge.

You Should Know

You might discover that controlling your urges can sometimes be challenging. Whether you are trying to manage overeating, or other self-defeating behaviors, you already know that it is much more than just a matter of willpower.

When you have an urge to do something, even if it is something that you know is self-destructive, the pleasure centers in your brain take a shortcut, overriding the thinking part of your brain (the neocortex), and send a “do it now!” signal to the parts of your brain that control your actions. This happens in a split second.

You can control your urges and resist temptation by activating the thinking part of your brain. When you do this over and over again it becomes a habit, and eventually you will find that you are able to resist temptation to do things that are self-defeating and unhealthy.

A little preparation will help. Here are some ideas:

- Avoid situations or things that trigger cravings.
- When you feel you might be overwhelmed by your urges, call someone and talk it out.
- Remove temptations from your home.
- Get enough sleep.
- Engage in physical activity every day for at least 20–30 minutes.
- Eat a balanced and nutritious diet.
- Use deep breathing and relaxation techniques when you start thinking about your urges.

This worksheet will help you practice controlling your urge to binge eat. Make copies of this worksheet and keep them handy so you can fill one out each time you feel yourself losing self-control.

What to Do

Fill in this worksheet when you feel the urge to binge eat.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Rate your urge, where 10 = My urge to overeat is impossible to ignore, to 1 = My urge is minor and I should have no trouble controlling myself: _____

Describe your urge.

What triggered the urge to overeat or binge?

What are the negative consequences of giving in to this urge?

What are the positive consequences of controlling your urges?

What can you do instead of giving in to your urges?

Who can you call or contact who can give you support to control your urges?

Are there other resources or tools you can use to avoid overeating? Describe.

After you complete the worksheet, rate your urge from 1 to 10, with 1 = My urge is gone, to 10 = My urge to overeat or binge is still as strong as ever: _____

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Stopping a Binge Before It Starts

Objective

To identify ways to stop binge episodes before they begin.

You Should Know

Sometimes the urge to overeat can be overwhelming. Initially, you might feel relief if you give in to the urge to binge, but often shame, guilt, and regret follow. Fortunately, it is possible to stop a binge before it starts.

There are long-term strategies you can use to reduce the possibility of binge eating.

- **Follow a regular meal plan.** Dietary restriction and undereating in an attempt to lose weight or make up for a binge can lead you to feeling hungry and overeating or bingeing again, supporting an unhealthy cycle that seems never-ending.
- **Focus on health, not weight.** Your desire to lose weight can actually support the bingeing cycle. Instead, focus on overall fitness and health instead of the numbers on the scale.
- **Identify your triggers.** What situations, people, or behaviors tend to lead to binge eating? Learn what feelings, moods, interactions, and relationships support your urge to binge eat. Once you identify your triggers, you can reframe the problem from, “I’m starving,” to “I’m actually upset because I am fighting with my partner.”
- **Remove temptation.** Initially, it might be best to avoid stocking up on foods that trigger you to binge.
- **Discover ways to feel good—other than eating.** Seek out non-food sources of pleasure. For example, try an activity you enjoyed when you were a child, take up a hobby, volunteer, or join an exercise class.

What can you do when the urge strikes? First, recognize that you might be in the “danger zone,” and notice your urge before taking the first bite of food. Become aware of your moods, emotions, and what makes you feel anxious or depressed. Immediately upon noticing the urge, identify ways to avoid bingeing. For example, you might keep a list of your goals and values on the refrigerator. Ask yourself if bingeing is consistent with them and choose an alternative to raiding the refrigerator and overeating.

Sometimes distracting yourself by delaying the binge helps you avoid it altogether. Count your breaths, practice yoga, take a walk, listen to music, or call a friend. Accept that there will be times when your urge is intense or overwhelming. If you choose to binge, you are acting on the urge to soothe yourself and eliminate that urge. So, even if you start to overeat, you do not have to continue. After a few bites of food, slow yourself down and recognize that you can stop at any time. Ask yourself, “What is continuing this behavior going to accomplish right now? What’s it going to do for me? How will I feel if I overeat?”

This worksheet will help you increase your awareness about what leads up to a binge and identify steps you can take to stop a binge episode before it begins. Following the example, complete the chart and describe when you feel the urge to binge, and what you decide to do. Then, answer the following questions.

What Triggered You?	What Happened?	How Did You Feel?	What Do You Want to Do to Feel Better?	Alternative Behavior to Stop the Binge	Consequence of Your Choice
<i>I yelled at my partner.</i>	<i>My partner and I were fighting about money, and I blew up.</i>	<i>I felt awful because I said unkind things.</i>	<i>I wanted to finish off a carton of ice cream.</i>	<i>I took a walk instead of overeating.</i>	<i>I felt happier and energized, and when I returned I calmly apologized.</i>

Reflections on This Exercise

What were your most common triggers? Describe them.

Were you successful at stopping binge episodes before they began? Describe what worked for you to avoid overeating.

Did you find this exercise challenging? Describe any obstacles or challenges you experienced.

What are some other tools or resources you can use to avoid bingeing?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Identifying and Coping with Risky Situations

Objective

To identify high-risk situations that might lead to relapses.

You Should Know

When you are recovering from binge eating disorder, it is important to identify high-risk situations that may place you at risk of relapse. Some high-risk situations might be obvious to you, others not so obvious. A good way to identify these situations is to track your urges and symptoms in a journal and identify what is happening just prior to the onset of the urge to overeat.

Once you have clearly defined places, events, people, or other triggers, you can implement strategies to prevent relapse. In the beginning of treatment, you might want to avoid risky situations altogether. Once you are confident in your recovery and your ability to avoid acting on your urges, you can gradually add these risky situations back into your life. There are situations that you simply cannot avoid (such as grocery shopping), so for unavoidable situations it is important to make a plan to cope with urges.

To use grocery shopping as an example: it can be especially difficult for someone recovering from binge eating disorder. You might want to purchase foods that you typically consumed when you binged. One part of recovery is learning healthy eating habits, and this involves purchasing food that supports this goal.

There are several strategies you can use when grocery shopping. Here are a few ideas:

1. Plan meals in advance, make a list of exactly what you need to purchase, and stick to your shopping list.
2. Only take enough cash to purchase what is on your list. Leave credit cards at home.
3. To prevent binge episodes, you might need to shop daily instead of weekly to avoid having too much food in the house. Only purchase enough food for one day of meals and snacks.
4. Grocery shop after you have eaten a meal or snack—not when you are ravenously hungry.
5. Shop with a supportive friend or family member.
6. Use an online service. Order your groceries online and have them delivered.

This worksheet will help you identify which situations are most risky for you. Then, you can identify strategies that work for you to avoid setbacks and relapses.

What to Do

This exercise will assist you in identifying high-risk situations where the chance of experiencing setbacks or relapses is high. Check off which situations pose the most risk for you, then rate yourself using the following scale, where 0 = No risk for relapse, to 10 = High risk for engaging in bingeing or overeating. When you are finished, answer the following questions.

	Rating:
___ My schedule is very busy, making meal planning difficult.	___
___ I feel overwhelmed by uncomfortable feelings or emotions.	___
___ I have recently lost a family member or friend.	___
___ I am experiencing interpersonal problems.	___
___ My schedule frequently changes because of travel or relocating.	___
___ My weight constantly fluctuates.	___
___ I often start and stop diets.	___
___ I miss a meal or snack and feel ravenously hungry.	___
___ I engage in fasting, juice cleanses, or detox programs.	___
___ My friends are overly health-conscious.	___
___ My friends or family members decide to diet.	___
___ I am in an unfamiliar environment where there is unlimited food.	___
___ I have unrestricted access to food (e.g., buffet, holiday meal, or potluck)	___
___ I attend a physical appointment and I am weighed by my doctor.	___
___ When I am shopping for clothes, I realize I must purchase a larger size.	___
___ I am pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant.	___
___ I am dating a new person.	___
___ I am upset by others commenting on my weight.	___
___ I am ill or experiencing health problems.	___
___ I am experiencing conflict or stress at work or school.	___
___ I recently experienced a divorce or break-up.	___
Other: _____	___

Choose four of the risky situations you marked off above, circle each one, then write down one strategy that would help you cope and allow you to get back on track.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Reflections on This Exercise

Describe your plan for dealing with risky situations.

What other tools, strategies, or resources can you use to prevent setbacks and relapse?

If your initial plan does not work, what alternate strategies can you use?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Establishing an Accountability Plan in Binge Eating Disorder Recovery

Objective

To establish accountability strategies to support successful recovery from binge eating disorder.

You Should Know

Recovery from binge eating disorder is not an easy or straightforward process. Establishing a healthy relationship with food and your body requires ongoing effort and motivation.

Sometimes motivation is not enough for successful recovery and your efforts might wane.

Sometimes it is challenging to maintain recovery efforts, so it is important to have an accountability plan in place.

One important element for successful recovery is accountability. Establishing accountability is one tool you can use in your ongoing recovery efforts. It is important that your support system is knowledgeable about binge eating and the recovery process. Therapists, sponsors, dietitians, family members, friends, and support group members can all be involved in your accountability network. Your responsibility is to honestly and openly share your goals, intentions, and challenges with your team. When you commit to someone else that you will take specific steps or actions, you create a safety net and sense of purpose which will strengthen your motivation.

Accountability strategies can be included in your recovery plan. First, commit to being open and transparent with your team so you can communicate your thoughts, urges, and behaviors as they come up. You might be hesitant to openly communicate with your team because you are afraid of being judged, misunderstood, rejected, or invalidated. As time goes on you will become more comfortable. Next, identify activities that might be particularly challenging for you. Outline ways your team can support you—for example, dining with you or being available to talk to you or text during a particularly difficult time. Include best ways to communicate and availability (e.g., via text, email, or apps such as Snap Chat; 24/7 or 9:00-5:00). Finally, you can write a contract that outlines your specific goals for recovery, how you will be held accountable, plan for setbacks, and what you can do to recommit to your recovery plan if you experience relapses.

The support from your team can help you remain committed to your recovery plan. If you are struggling, honestly acknowledge and communicate that you have urges or you feel triggered. Regardless of the challenges, you have the opportunity to commit to recovery each day. This worksheet will help you strengthen your commitment to your recovery goals through the creation of an accountability plan.

What to Do

This worksheet will assist you in thinking of ways to create accountability for yourself and to take responsibility when you have urges, feel triggered, or experience setbacks. Answer each of the following questions for behaviors that might impact your recovery efforts.

Overeating/ Bingeing Trigger	Who/What Holds Me Accountable?	How will I take responsibility?	What are the consequences of bingeing?	If I overeat, what can I do to get back on track?

Reflections on This Exercise

What are some of the behaviors for which you require accountability?

List three to five people you can rely on to hold you accountable. Include how you can reach them and the days/times they are available.

Thinking about your most common triggers, what can you do to set yourself up for success through an accountability plan?

What are some other ways that you can hold yourself accountable and take responsibility?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Tracking Your Recovery Activities

Objective

To create accountability for your choices and actions by keeping track of your recovery-related activities.

You Should Know

One key ingredient of recovering from binge eating disorder is staying active and accountable in your recovery. That means not leaving anything to chance. The more you take action to build your network, the better your chance of success.

You might believe that you have the willpower and self-motivation on your own. Self-motivation is a great thing, but even the most motivated people lose their momentum and determination sometimes. If you wait until one of those times, you might be too tired, overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed to reach out and ask for help if you are triggered to overeat or binge. Many experts believe that remaining engaged in regular recovery-related activities lowers your risk of slipping or relapsing.

What to Do

In this worksheet, you will track your recovery-related activities, meaning specific events that are directly related to your recovery from binge eating disorder.

Some recovery-related activities include:

- Overeaters Anonymous meeting.
 - Facilitated therapy group.
 - Individual therapy.
 - Maintaining a food diary.
 - Inpatient program.
 - Meeting with a mentor or “recovery buddy.”
 - Intensive outpatient program (day treatment).
 - Psychiatric or medication consultation.
 - Informal support group.
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

For the next month, track your recovery activities on the chart below. Make copies of this worksheet, or use a journal for additional space.

Week of _____

	Activity	Where?	Time of day	With Whom?	Notes
Sunday					
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Dealing with Self-Sabotage

Objective

To identify and manage self-sabotaging behavior.

You Should Know

Behavior is self-sabotaging when it creates problems in your life and interferes with your goals. Compulsive overeating and bingeing might soothe you in the moment, but repeatedly engaging in these behaviors ultimately undermines your efforts to recover from your eating disorder.

Self-sabotage influences your split-second everyday choices with impulses that oppose your intention to eliminate binge eating. You might not always be aware of your self-sabotaging behaviors because the effects may not show up for some time. Connecting sabotaging behaviors to self-defeating consequences is no guarantee that you will reduce or eliminate the behavior. Still, it is possible to deal with self-sabotage. You can learn to interrupt habitual patterns while strengthening intentional self-regulation processes.

Willpower may not be a match for your cravings, and repeated indulgences over time can lead to a diminishing of your sense of well-being, making you vulnerable to depression and intensified cravings. It is those increasingly unpleasant lows that will maintain the cycle of binge eating in order to cope.

There is a simple and effective method you can use to eliminate self-sabotaging behaviors. The process involves 4 steps that allow you to consciously control the behaviors currently influencing your choices, decisions, and actions.

1. Identify Your Self-Sabotaging Behavior. What behaviors prevent you from moving forward? To identify those behaviors, you become consciously aware of your daily choices, decisions, actions, and the resulting consequences. Once your behaviors have been identified, it is necessary to pinpoint specific triggers that may be supporting these behaviors. Triggers might include people, objects, specific times, situations, events, or locations.

2. Re-create Your Self-Sabotaging Patterns. Now, you can consciously re-create the self-sabotaging pattern by identifying triggers and the associated behaviors.

3. Identify Alternative Behaviors. To eliminate an old behavioral pattern, first replace it with a new pattern that supports your well-being. This is important because at times it is challenging to avoid certain triggers, such as people or circumstances, that lead you to binge eat.

4. Practice the Alternative Behavior Until a Habit Is Formed. Once you have identified alternative behaviors, take the time to practice implementing them as often as possible until new habits are established.

What to Do

Use the following chart to track situations that trigger self-sabotaging behavior, including specific details about self-sabotaging behavior. Reflect on the consequences, and then identify alternative behaviors that support your well-being rather than sabotage your efforts to overcome binge eating disorder.

Situation	Trigger	Self-Sabotaging Behavior You Might Normally Choose	Consequences	Alternative Behavior

Is it possible to remove or avoid these triggers altogether? If so, what can you do?

Describe your patterns of self-sabotaging behaviors.

How do your beliefs about your triggers support self-sabotage patterns? What can you do to challenge your beliefs?

Describe one of the alternative behaviors you identified to replace a self-sabotaging behavior?

What is a more helpful perspective you might take? How could you respond in a more appropriate, resourceful, or practical way that would help you avoid overeating?

What are some of the reasons for eliminating self-sabotaging behaviors, including long-term benefits of changing how you respond?

Reflection on This Exercise

List some of the ways you have sabotaged yourself with food.

List some of the ways self-sabotaging behaviors negatively impact your life.

If you eliminate self-sabotaging behavior, what might happen?

What are some of the ways you can stop yourself from self-sabotage?

Are you ready to commit to making the changes involved in eliminating self-sabotaging behavior? If not, what would need to happen for you to increase your readiness for commitment?

Who are some people who can support you to resist self-sabotage?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Binge Eating Disorder Relapse Prevention

Objective

To identify and prevent setbacks and relapses in binge eating disorder recovery.

You Should Know

It takes courage, hard work, strength, and support to recover from binge eating disorder. Slips and minor setbacks are common, especially early in the recovery process. You might even experience relapse, which occurs when you return to disordered eating habits.

At this point, you might have stopped binge eating altogether. Awareness of the warning signs or triggers is important so that you can avoid relapse. Once you have relapsed, it might be difficult to refocus on recovery. It is important to recognize when a setback is imminent for effective intervention. An early warning sign might be a particular thought pattern. For example, on a bad day you might feel stressed or depressed and stop by a convenience store for junk food.

Think about the times when you might be at risk for setbacks. High risk situations might involve stressful periods in your life, significant weight gain, or holidays. Identifying risky situations prepares you to prevent setbacks and avoid relapse.

As part of your recovery efforts, create a plan to cope with early warning signs of setbacks and lapses. Remember, you might experience setbacks but that does not mean you have relapsed. Instead, use the setbacks or lapses as opportunities to learn about yourself. Binge eating disorder recovery is a process, and your healthy habits will eventually replace disordered eating patterns.

Here are some steps you can take to prevent relapse:

- 1. Develop and tap into your support system.** Surround yourself with supportive and encouraging people. They might be members of your family, your friends, mentors, or counselors. They will be there to support you when you are struggling. It might not always be easy to reach out, but work on getting comfortable asking for help when you need it. You might make a list of names and phone numbers to call or text if you find yourself slipping back into old thought patterns or unhealthy eating behaviors.
- 2. Reduce negative influences.** Identify the negative influences in your life and find ways to reduce or avoid these situations or people. Make a list of all of your good qualities and use it when you feel critical or negative.
- 3. Identify your triggers.** Sometimes feeling stressed, anxious, depressed, or lonely can trigger you. Upsetting or traumatic experiences can lead to a setback. Some people are more likely to

relapse at certain times of the year (e.g., during holidays). To identify your triggers, think of times when you were tempted to binge and consider what contributed to these urges.

4. **Make a plan.** List your potential triggers that could lead you to binge eat. Then come up with a plan for dealing with each of these triggers in a healthier way. Your plan might include calling a friend, listening to music, taking a walk, or journaling.

5. **Meal planning.** A meal and snack schedule can prevent you from going back to disordered eating habits. Plan your meals and snacks ahead of time, and stick to your plan.

6. **Keep busy and get involved.** Engage in a hobby or activity that you enjoy. You might enjoy crafting, volunteering, walking in nature, or joining a club. If you make time to do the things you enjoy your focus will shift away from food.

7. **Take time for yourself.** It is important to schedule time for yourself every day. You might simply rest and reflect, meditate, or nap.

Even if you have a plan in place to prevent setbacks or relapse, you might occasionally recognize that you are at risk of returning to disordered eating patterns.

Some warning signs are:

- Feeling sad or hopeless.
- Stocking up or hoarding food.
- Wearing loose-fitting clothing and worrying about your weight.
- Thinking obsessively about food and eating.
- Difficulty coping with stress.
- Spending a lot of time alone.
- Sneaking food or eating late at night.
- Job loss, divorce, financial difficulties, or death of a family member.

If you are worried that a relapse may happen, it is important to get help right away. Your support team can be important in helping you prevent relapse. This is especially true during the early stages of recovery, which can be overwhelming.

It is important that you have realistic expectations about your disordered eating behaviors. Although you may not be able to avoid slips, setbacks, or even relapses, there are steps you can take to lessen their severity and frequency. This worksheet will help you identify times of high risk, triggers, thought patterns, or behaviors that might signal you are slipping or experiencing a setback and think of ways to prevent relapses.

What to Do

First, identify times of high risk, thought patterns, or behaviors that might signal that you are slipping or experiencing a setback.

Next, identify early warning signs and the associated thoughts or behaviors.

Early Warning Sign	Thought or Behavior

Finally, indicate what triggered you and what you can do differently. Think of ways you can get back on track without relapsing.

Trigger	How can you immediately get back on track?	What can you do differently in the future?

Reflections on This Exercise

Considering times of high risk, what specific situations increase your urge to overeat?

What are three thoughts or behaviors that signal or trigger setbacks or relapse?

1.

2.

3.

What are changes that other people might notice in you that indicate you are struggling?

What are some other tools or resources you can use to prevent setbacks or relapse?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Self-Care to Prevent Setbacks

Objective

To identify ways to integrate self-care activities into recovery to avoid setbacks and relapses.

You Should Know

Recovering from binge eating disorder includes changing your eating behavior and habits, dealing with body image issues, and modifying distorted thought patterns. It also involves discovering or increasing healthy habits, including self-care activities. It is important to integrate self-care activities into your life and find ways to balance all the elements of your recovery. To support your recovery and prevent relapses, you can place your attention on creating good health through self-care habits. When you integrate positive activities into your life, eventually you will make those healthy habits a permanent part of your routine.

What exactly is self-care? It is the process of intentionally engaging in activities that support all aspects of your well-being: physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, professional or academic, and interpersonal well-being. It is virtually impossible to attain perfect balance in all life areas, but you can strive to have a flexible approach to self-care. Rigid rules or restrictions are not required!

For many people with eating disorders, self-care can feel awkward or uncomfortable. Sometimes self-kindness is missing if you are depressed or feeling embarrassed or ashamed about overeating. However, recovery does involve self-care, self-compassion, and kindness. Practicing self-care is a form self-love or kindness. Self-care requires you to release old expectations or rules and focus on engaging in activities that support rather than harm your health.

One way to integrate self-care activities into your day is to add these activities to your schedule. You can create reminders for yourself (e.g., sticky notes or phone reminders). Regardless of the self-care activities you add to your life, start small and give yourself a chance to adjust to the changes in your daily routine. This worksheet will help you identify the self-care activities you would like to include in your daily schedule.

What to Do

Here is a list of ways to practice self-care. Use the scale 0 = Never, 1 = Sometimes, 2 = Often, or 3 = Almost Always. Then answer the following questions.

- ___ I exercise as recommended by my treatment team.
- ___ I eat according to my healthy meal plan.
- ___ I get enough sleep and I nap or rest if needed.
- ___ I take medications or supplements as recommended.
- ___ I practice self-reflection, deep breathing, or meditation.
- ___ I attend support groups or counseling sessions to support my recovery.
- ___ I participate in relaxing activities.
- ___ I regularly use coping skills (e.g., journaling or listening to music).
- ___ I allow myself to experience a wide range of emotions.
- ___ I engage in fun activities with friends.
- ___ I take breaks and rest as required.
- ___ I set limits in terms of my workload and hours I work each week.
- ___ I meet deadlines and keep up with my work or projects.
- ___ I say “no” and set healthy boundaries.
- ___ I spend time with family, significant others, or friends.
- ___ I socialize outside of work or school.
- ___ I have a support network I can and do rely on.
- ___ I ask for help.
- ___ I maintain my hygiene.
- ___ I take care of my household chores or have someone help me.
- ___ I create and follow a budget.
- ___ I have interests and hobbies.
- ___ I am satisfied that all of my needs are met and I feel content with my life.

Reflections on This Exercise

How can you use the information above to develop a personal self-care plan that works for you?
How can you plan for and remind yourself of self-care activities?

Did you discover self-care activities that you had not previously considered? What were they?

What three activities can you add to your day to support self-care?

What else can you do to effectively integrate daily self-care and commit to engaging in those activities each day?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Steps You Can Take to Improve Your Health

Objective

To set goals for improved health during recovery from binge eating disorder.

You Should Know

Focusing your attention on creating wellness for yourself is an important part of recovering from binge eating disorder. Improving your health may include attending nutrition coaching sessions, receiving emotional and spiritual support, dealing with medical issues, and setting up a physical fitness plan. Focusing on your wellness will support you in making better choices about what and how much to eat.

You might experience obstacles or challenges as you change your habits to improve your health while in recovery. For example, you might not know *how* to establish a healthy eating routine.

Planning will help you structure your time, and there are steps you can take to begin to improve your health:

1. Plan your meals to support healthy eating, which will support a healthy body weight and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Choose a variety of nutrient-dense foods, such as fruits, vegetables, healthy fat, protein, and grains. Limit junk or processed foods.
2. Make gradual, small changes. For example, you can include short bursts of physical activity in your schedule every day (10 minutes, 2–3 times per day) and add a green vegetable or salad to your dinner.
3. Journal each day. Record your progress by tracking your appointments, group sessions, food consumption, and physical activity.
4. Try a new activity or hobby, volunteer, or serve your community.
5. Stay hydrated. If you dislike plain water, eat fruits such as watermelon or add fruit to your water.
6. Adequately address any nutrient deficiencies by adding supplements. Consult with your doctor or a dietitian.
7. Schedule your regular physical check-ups (annual exam, mammogram, etc.).
8. Connect with a therapist, mentor, or support group.
9. Mend interpersonal relationships that have been damaged.

Improving and maintaining your physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health is very important as you recover from binge eating disorder. The goal is to focus on health and well-being—no matter what size you are. This worksheet will help you set goals for improved health.

What to Do

Whether you are making short-term or long-term goals, it is a good idea to write down the steps required to achieve your goals for improved health. Using the following chart, list the steps you would like to take over the next three months to improve your health, then answer the following questions.

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Reflections on This Exercise

What did you learn about yourself during this exercise?

What tools or resources did you identify to improve your health?

Describe other tools or resources to improve your well-being.

Describe three obstacles to achieving your health and wellness goals.

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

What can you do to overcome these obstacles? Include resources, tools, or supportive people and groups.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Overcoming Your **Binge Eating Disorder**

Binge eating disorder is the most common eating disorder in adults, impacting the lives of more than 7 million Americans. This disorder is characterized by uncontrolled excessive eating, followed by feelings of embarrassment, disgust, shame, self-loathing, or guilt. People with binge eating disorder are usually overweight and may suffer health problems, yet they feel like they have no control over their eating. Nearly half of people who binge eat also have depression. If you are struggling with compulsive overeating and binge eating, this workbook can help you successfully overcome this distressing disorder. This therapeutic assignment workbook is intended to be used along with help from a psychotherapist or counselor because binge eating disorder can be very difficult to overcome alone, and counseling can help you focus on what you can do to reduce and eventually eliminate binge eating episodes.

The first section of the workbook, **Self-Exploration**, focuses on assessment and education.

Assignments include:

- Identifying Faulty Beliefs That Support Unhealthy Eating Habits
- Is It Time to Give Up Chronic Dieting?

The second section, **Self-Monitoring**, reviews ways to establish healthy eating and activity habits, as well as monitor food - and eating-related behaviors.

Assignments include:

- Meal Planning to Eliminate Binge Eating
- Accurately Identifying Your Body Cues

The third section, **Techniques to Stop Binge Eating**, focuses on building skills to manage your emotions and choices, as well as effectively cope with the stress that can trigger overeating.

Assignments include:

- Practicing Delay and Identifying Alternative Actions
- Managing Your Emotions to Avoid Binge Eating

The final section of this workbook, **Relapse Prevention**, offers tools to prevent setbacks and relapses.

Assignments include:

- Establishing an Accountability Plan in Binge Eating Disorder Recovery
- Dealing with Self-Sabotage

About the Author:

Angela M. Doel, M.S., is a writer and director of operations at Between Sessions Resources. She has served in various clinical supervisory positions and worked as a family therapist. Ms. Doel earned her M.S. in Counseling Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. She holds an advanced certificate in nutritional counseling, and her areas of specialization are health education and eating disorders.

About the Series:

Overcoming Binge Eating Disorder is part of a series of workbooks designed to give therapists and their clients easy access to practical evidence-based psychotherapy tools. Each workbook represents a complete treatment program.

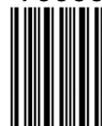
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