

Eating Styles: The Restrained Eater

A restrained eater is one who is described as in control of their eating or exercises for a period of time. The restrained eater does well with limiting food and avoiding the “**bad**” foods for a while. This person feels in control, until something or someone disrupts his/her life. The disruption leads to the person feeling out of control, which leads to disruption of his/her eating patterns.

Situations that may disrupt, or “disinhibit” the restrained eater’s control over eating:

1. Restrained eaters have a calorie limit, or a list of “bad” foods that they should not eat. Once they eat the “bad” food or exceed their calorie goal for the day, self-defeating thoughts begin. Self-defeating thoughts include,

- “I have blown my diet, so I might as well keep eating.”
- “I’ll never be able to lose this weight.”
- “I’ve blown my diet in the past, and I will continue to fail.”

Stop and challenge those irrational thoughts:

1. You may have eaten more than you had planned, but often the episode is not as bad as you make it out to be. Expecting to be perfect can be a problem.
2. Learn from the situation. What cue or event triggered you to eat inappropriately?
3. Get the facts on paper. Write down what you’ve eaten and total up the calories. Make a plan to immediately get back on track.

Fatigue and Negative Emotions:

When we feel physically tired or emotionally upset, our resolve may not be as strong to stay with our healthy eating and exercise plan and there is little energy left to deal with the tasks of weight management. Food can also be used as a source of comfort and used to boost our energy.

1. Acknowledge your feelings and emotions.
2. Recognize and avoid high-risk situations, if possible.
3. Take steps to minimize stressful situations.
4. Find non-food ways to deal with the stress such as exercise, listening to favorite music, deep breathing exercises.
5. Have appropriate foods available to avoid skipping meals & snacks.

Deprivation: Routinely depriving one or following a diet too restrictive in calories.

1. Severely restricting calories, or not allowing any of your favorite foods will at some point backfire and lead to overeating or binge eating.
 - a. Talk with your registered dietitian about an appropriate calorie level for weight loss.
 - b. Allow yourself some of your favorite foods in small quantities.

Consumption of alcohol:

Alcohol is a form of liquid calories, which can weaken restraint pre-surgery. Post-bariatric surgery, alcohol continues to be a form of liquid calories and you can become inebriated much faster. **Consuming alcohol after bariatric surgery is not recommended.**

Pre-Surgery tips if you drink alcohol:

1. Plan your alcohol consumption carefully to avoid losing control of your eating. Remove high calorie snacks from reach.
2. Have a glass of water or other calorie-free beverage along with the alcohol.
3. Beware of the high calorie content of alcoholic beverages. Hard liquor contains about 100 calories per 1 ½ ounces. Beer, wine, and champagne are also high in empty calories. If you choose to have an alcoholic beverage, a wine spritzer or lite beer would be better choices. They provide fewer calories.

Social Situations for the restrained eater:

Social situations are difficult for most people, but for the restrained eater, it is particularly difficult.

1. A special occasion implies that it's not "business as usual." It can be an invitation to enjoy the available foods and let go of the normal eating routine.
2. Often people who are trying to lose weight feel that they are being deprived, as they see other people eating and enjoying the foods. They want to have that same enjoyment!
3. There are many pressures and demands to eat from the host and hostesses who want to make sure everyone is having a good time and may repeatedly offer more food and drink. You don't want to disappoint the host/hostess.

Coping strategies: Learn from your experiences at other parties. How much did you eat and drink? Plan in advance of the social event of what you will eat and drink. Think about how you will respond to urges from others or your own desires to eat more than you have planned. Write down potential cues and how you plan to deal with the cue(s) in advance of the party. See the **"Eating Style: The Social Eater"** handout for more information.