

THE EATING GUIDELINES

The Eating Guidelines are the core of the Breaking Free program. They are as follows:

1. Eat when you are hungry.
2. Eat sitting down in a calm environment. This does not include the car.
3. Eat without distractions. Distractions include radio, television, newspapers, books, intense or anxiety-producing conversations and music.
4. Eat only what you want (not what you think you should want!).
5. Eat until you are satisfied.
6. Eat (with the intention of being) in full view of others.
7. Eat with enjoyment, pleasure and gusto.

BREAKING FREE

Stages of Breaking Free

Stage I: **Acknowledging that there is a problem** – that the problem is more complex than being overweight, and dieting does not, and will never, resolve it.

Stage II: **Beginning/ Rebellng Against the Years of Deprivation**
(Approximate time: 0 – 6 months & if it takes you a longer, or shorter, time that's fine)

Physical: Eating mainly (what were previously) “forbidden foods”:
eating all the time – not just when hungry and not until
satisfied.

Learning what hunger, satisfaction, fullness feels like.

Learning what makes eating pleasurable; (i.e. sitting, not
reading or watching TV, eating slowly, etc.)

Possibly gaining weight.

Emotional: Relief, exhilaration at not dieting.

Panic and fear that this stage will go on forever and that
because this works like a binge, this method is no different
than any other.

Sometimes there is a feeling of hopelessness that there is no
end to compulsive eating.

Tips:

Don't panic at the weight gain. It is not atypical and is a natural reaction to years of deprivation. You will not gain 100 lbs.

Throw away your scales or paste your ideal weight on them.

Try to distinguish between foods you think you want (because you weren't allowed to have them) and foods you really do want in the present moment.

This stage will end. Do not go on another diet because you are afraid it won't end.

Stage III: "The Middle"/ Nitty Gritty/ Learning-To-Trust-And Befriend-Yourself Stage
(Approximate time: 6 months – 9 months)

Physical:

Eating without guilt.

No more bingeing.

Weight stabilizes.

Discovery of foods you really like/ want from those that were previously forbidden (hummers/ beckoners).

Ability to eat only a bite or two of chocolate.

Foods besides sweets begin to taste good – you learn what nourishes you.

Begin to have faith in body wisdom as you see that you can eat what you want and not gain weight.

You eat when you are hungry although, often, don't stop at just enough.

Emotional:

The mind still wants more food than the body and this is a little difficult to accept.

A lot of joy in realizing that after all these years, your body can still get hungry.

A sense of power develops as you see that you control food – it doesn't control you.

This is the hard-work stage – when you stop eating when you're not hungry, the emotions surface that drove you to eat in the first place. If you are willing to work with yourself:

You develop ways of dealing with your feelings besides using food. Some of these ways are:

- Keeping a journal
- Being in therapy
- Talking with your friends about your feelings
- Expressing your feelings as they arise.

You learn that food isn't all that's good or pleasurable about life. You learn ways to nourish yourself:

- Taking walks, baths, naps
- Reading
- Going to films
- Meeting with friends
- Getting massaged
- Doing something you've always wanted to do
- Writing
- Dancing

You begin to value other things about yourself besides your body – and begin to realize that other people value you as well.

Your values about living change as you see that you can feel happy and satisfied without being thin; the inner life becomes important.

Tips:

Weight loss might occur but it is not the predominant characteristic of this stage.

What is predominant is the shift from viewing oneself as an out-of-control human being to one who can make choices that will nourish oneself.

This stage is the most difficult because of all the feelings that arise and it takes “an ocean of patience” and renewed commitment to the “breaking free” process.

Remember that this is a stage and that it will end.

The fear that often arises in this stage is that if you deal with your compulsive eating and lose weight, you will no longer have an excuse (i.e. you’re fat) on which to blame all your “failures” and that’s true! But, on the other hand, you will have more energy available to you. You will feel better about yourself and you won’t need an excuse.

Stage IV: The Joys of Breaking Free

Physical:

Weight loss occurs – slowly!

You eat what you want, stop when you’re satisfied.

What you want has drastically changed from Stage II. What you want now is usually nourishing foods with occasional or small bites of sweets instead of large amounts of sweets and occasional scrambled eggs.

You enjoy your body. You accept your body even though it is not perfect.

Food becomes delightful instead of a source of pain.

Physical:
(cont.)

When you are not hungry, you don't think about eating.

You can go anywhere; have any kind of food in front of you without going on a binge/ eating compulsively.

Emotional:

You ask for what you want as well as eat what you want.

You feel better about yourself than you ever imagined you could feel. You are self-confident, self-trusting.

This confidence and trust extends into so many other areas of your life – work, relationships.

You have more energy with which to live since your life is not revolving around food.

You have many more skills with which to deal with problems.

Tips:

Sometimes you, like everyone else, will overeat. But now, you will not take it as a sign that you are a failure.

Your weight will fluctuate 5-8 lbs. From season to season. Sometimes you will want to eat more than other times. That's okay. Sometimes your body needs more food.