

Solutions:

Support for Emotional and Binge Eating

Lesson 24: Wellness and Resiliency Planning

Check In

- What is a success and a challenge from the past week? What did you learn about yourself as you worked through the challenge and success?
- What are any thoughts and feelings you have at this point of your recovery journey?
- How can the group support you this week?

Quote of the Week

Most people are afraid of suffering. But suffering is a kind of mud to help the lotus flower of happiness grow. There can be no lotus flower without the mud.

-Thich Nhat Hanh

A Weight-Inclusive Framework for Health

Considers factors beyond weight that impact health:

- People of all sizes deserve to pursue and have equal access to strategies and treatments that support their bodies achieving optimal health as they define it.
- Discourages pursuit of weight loss, not weight loss itself. Encourages taking care of your body and if weight change occurs, it's a side effect rather than the goal.
- Doesn't use the number on the scale to determine health.
- Recognizes impact of fat shaming, weight stigma, and social determinants on health.
- Promotes behaviors that support your physical and emotional wellbeing.
 - Movement, sleep, nutrition, stress management, and social connections.

Activity

From: The Emotional Eating, Chronic Dieting, Binge Eating & Body Image Workbook (Matz, Pershing, Harrison, 2024)

Take a survey of behaviors that you practice in the name of health. For each, note whether you would still practice each behavior if you weren't pursuing weight loss and whether it's truly sustainable.

Behavior	For the purpose of weight loss? (Yes or No)	Sustainable? (Yes or No)
Certain types of exercise		
Supplements		
Eating/restricting certain foods		
Who you interact with/how you interact		
Social events you attend/don't attend		
Other:		

Opportunity for Change

Can you consider letting go of any behaviors you identified for the purpose of weight loss or that aren't sustainable? Or can you identify a non-weight related motivation for that behavior?

Let's review some other positive, sustainable self-care practices that will support your body without focusing on weight. These are not new rules or guidelines. Consider how you feel towards each and whether these practices are accessible.

Movement

You can consider using the terms *movement* or *activity* if you have negative or diet associations with the word exercise.

- To help unlink physical activity from the pursuit of weight loss, make a list of reasons you might choose to be physically active in ways that aren't related to body size.
- Remind yourself that movement is not an obligation by listing the reasons *you* would like to move your body, including the types of movement that feel best to you.

Sleep

Quality sleep is essential for mental and physical health, including: mood regulation, motivation, concentration, memory consolidation, problem-solving abilities, vulnerability to emotional distress, and relationship satisfaction.

Sleep deprivation impairs mood regulation mechanisms, increases mood fluctuations, heightens vulnerability to emotional distress, lowers mental acuity, and reduces the desire and ability to engage in relationship interactions effectively.

Sleep experts recommend that adults get at least seven hours of sleep each night, with some people needing as many as ten hours.

Sleep

- List the factors that interfere with you getting enough sleep. For each, what changes can you make at this time in your life to improve your sleep quality?
 - *For factors like sleep apnea or anxiety, consider working with a health professional to learn strategies for feeling more rested.*
- If there are reasons for your sleep deprivation that are out of your control (working multiple jobs, children waking you up in the night), how can you offer yourself compassion for the impact they have on you?

Nutrition

Gentle nutrition allows you to think about how different foods support your body and how it feels.

- What foods would you like to add more of into your diet (instead of what diet culture tells you to eliminate)?
- Listen to your body's cues of hunger and fullness to support your eating choices. Your body will never ask you to binge or diet. What makes it more difficult to interpret these cues from your body? What skills can help you regulate your body?

Nutrition

- Flexibility is key! If you are more activated and have less access to your hunger/fullness cues, then a more structured meal plan may be most helpful to you for that meal. If you are more regulated and have decent access to your body's cues, this would be a great opportunity to practice eating intuitively!
- Allow yourself to have *enough* food and a wide enough *variety* of foods to keep your body satisfied and nourished. Having choices supports a secure and regulated physical state, which allows access to accurate perception of hunger/fullness cues.

Stress Management

Stress is an unavoidable part of life and serves an important purpose of keeping us safe. However, chronic stress will eventually lead to physical and mental health detriments. Practicing calming techniques to regulate out of an activated state are helpful ways to manage stress by reducing its impact on your body.

What are some calming practices you might find helpful for managing stress consistently?

- Aromatherapy, progressive muscle relaxation, mindful breathing, massage, listen to music, light a candle, sit with a blanket, yoga/gentle movement, buy yourself some flowers, spend time in nature, coloring/crafts, hobbies, etc.

Social Connections

Human beings need connection to be well and thrive. Our need for connection is arguably as important as our need for food, shelter, and other essentials. Frequent social contacts are protective for our physical and emotional wellbeing, whereas social isolation has been shown to lead to poorer physical and mental health (Mineo, 2017; NIH, 2017).

What ideas could be helpful for you to seek out or maintain social connections?

- Take a class, spend time with people you care about, join a group, volunteer, play a team sport, participate in a community of interest, engage in creative outlets with others, etc.

Challenging Weight Stigma

Underlying Assumptions:

- Losing weight is intrinsically possible and desirable
- Expected and accurate to feel shame for an “imperfect” body
- Thinner people are better, more disciplined, and necessarily healthier
- Losing weight necessarily results in being more attractive, powerful, valuable, seen

Stigma-driven assumptions about weight are damaging to health, overall wellbeing, and body trust.

- Asks us to not be the expert of our own body- encourages a focus on external rules about our body, food, and eating rather than recognizing the importance of attention to internal cues and sensations.

Challenging Weight Stigma

Body dissatisfaction is inversely related to healthy behaviors and stable weights.

- Emphasizing weight control can easily promote disordered eating behaviors, body shame, lower levels of physical activity, and weight gain over time.

Ultimately, we don't take good care of things that we have shame about.

Helpful ways to support your shift away from the diet mindset and towards greater body acceptance include:

- Managing diet conversations, navigating weight loss compliments, speaking out against diet culture, finding community, and building resilience.

Challenging Weight Stigma

- How can you respond to someone who starts a conversation based on the diet mindset (comments on your eating/body, focusing on weight loss, etc)? What other kinds of conversations nourish you?
- What qualities could you compliment people on that aren't related to body size? What would you like other people to notice about you not related to your body size?
- Are there any actions you want to take that help challenge diet culture?
- You are not alone in your journey to make peace with food and your body! Can you find any weight-inclusive groups to engage with? Are there any marginalized identities that describe you in addition to body size to support your sense of community (race, gender identity, physical ability, etc)?

Building Recovery Resiliency

One strategy to help you build recovery resilience is the 3R's (Harrison & Matz, 2021).

- **Remind** yourself that your weight is the result of complex factors (including genetics, dieting, medications, health conditions, and more).
- **Reject** weight stigma rather than internalizing it.
- **Repeat** “I deserve to be treated with respect at any size.”

Any last thoughts or questions?

References

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