

Using A Food Log to Address Problematic Eating Habits

Objective

To use a self-monitoring food log to record daily food intake, thoughts, feelings, and problematic eating behaviors.

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 intake tracking 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, to improve your relationship with food, and to decrease problematic eating behaviors. You won't be completing food logs forever; this temporary tool will help you bridge the gap between eating in an automatic habitual manner and eating mindfully.

Some people experience resistance to using food logs. If you've 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 food logs provide insight into your current habits and communicate specific details about your daily food intake. You can observe patterns over the course of a week related to meal times, location, hunger cues, situational triggers, and your thoughts and feelings before and after eating. You can track your exercise as well as whether you binge or purge. Food logs also provide a way to monitor your progress. Over time, food logs can help you strengthen your hunger and satiety signals and will help you control your eating rather than having it control 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 self-monitoring food logs immediately after eating to ensure accuracy. Don't wait until the end of the day to remember what you ate. If you don't have your log with you, carry a small notebook to jot notes that you can record in your log later.
- Don't record calories. 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.

My Self-Monitoring Food Log

Directions: Self-monitoring involves recording your daily food intake plus any thoughts or feelings you were experiencing. Complete this log for seven consecutive days, and include episodes of binging (B), vomiting (V), laxative use (L), and/or excessive exercise (E).

Date: _____

Time	Food/Liquid Intake	Location	B	V L E	Situations/Thoughts/Feelings

Think About It

Does it make you nervous or uncomfortable to record your daily eating behaviors?

Can you 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. Did they set you up for problematic eating behaviors?

Consider how you will fit self-monitoring into your life. For example, if you will be eating with friends or family, what will you do?

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?
