

Accurately Identifying Your Body Cues

Objective

To understand and identify body cues that lead to avoid 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?
