

What Kind of an Eater are YOU?

Take a moment and consider how you eat. Do you eat poorly when you are stressed, get too little sleep or when you're perhaps having too much fun? Do you eat differently when you travel? On weekends? When you're alone? Do you lack planning in your meals?

You need to understand what's going on inside your head. *What goes on between your ears is what's opening the lever to your jaw.* So if we can understand why we do things, we have the foundation for making lasting change.

Typically, research has found that there are **5 eating styles** that derail our best attempts at eating well.

1) The Procrastinator: You want to make changes but you continue to come up with excuses. You want to wait until that long weekend is over, or until your job settles in, or until life slows down. But life never slows down. Many of us are waiting for that magical push to get us started, but it rarely comes. This sets you up for failure.

So set yourself up for success by taking small steps. Print your grocery list at the beginning of the week and put a copy of it on your fridge. Stock healthy snacks at home or at work. Keep a water bottle with you at all times. Small shifts create small successes that can make you feel more and more competent, and will not overwhelm you and cause you to derail your efforts. A Procrastinator needs only to take the first step. So make it small, and make it stick. Your mantra is to ***get started and keep going.***



2) The Emotional Eater: Is food your comfort when you're stressed, guilty, angry or lonely? Or is food the enemy, something to be controlled or restricted in times of stress? Do you binge, feel guilty, restrict, feel worse, binge and repeat? Every day bring stresses, and to continually use food as a coping mechanism, you're in for a lifetime of anxiety, guilt, low self-esteem and poor health.

It's necessary to know your triggers, then you have to find other ways to deal with these emotions: journal, talk out loud, cry, go for a run. Face it head on, name it, say it out loud and you've shifted the pattern. And choose another behavior: if you're lonely, and you want to grab some food, call a friend, or write a list of what you're grateful about. Change the behavior, change the pattern, change your life. Look at food as fuel, health-building, a chance to

positively change the structure of your cells. Use it in a new way, see it in a new light. Your mantra is to **call it what it is, OUT LOUD. (I'm lonely, angry, sad.....)**

3) The Reactive Eater: Lack of structure is the villain here, due to lack of awareness of the amount of food consumed over the day. The reactive eater eats in the car, grabs calories from vending machines or is so busy, she forgets to eat. This leads to missed meals, and grabbing whatever is available when hunger eventually consumes you.

First: don't eat while doing other things. This will make you focus in and be aware of what you're eating. **Second,** plan your meals. A proactive eater is more likely to make healthy choices, less likely to skip meals and will be able to listen to the subtle clues of hunger and react at the time. Your mantra is to **plan your meals for the day, and eat without doing something else at the time.**

4) The Portion Distortionist: This eater doesn't understand how much food her body actually needs. She oscillates between overeating (whether it's healthy food or not), the restricting to maintain a certain weight. Often we're taught to clean our plates, or you just got accustomed to eating larger portions. Remember, a protein portion is the size of your palm, a grain is ½ a cup (measure it out, it's quite small!), and a serving of fruits or veggies is the size of a tennis ball. That's it. That's one meal.

Did you know today's generation doesn't even know what an 8-oz drink really is. A serving of cheese is the size of a pair of dice. Once you figure out the real size of something, you'll likely find that you're eating 2-3 times the servings you need. Throw out the dinner plate and use a salad or side plate as your visual guide. Now you're back to where we were 20 years ago. **Your mantra: I only need a side-plate sized meal to satisfy all my caloric needs.**

5) The Evening Eater: For these eaters, they consume most of their calories from dinner on through to night time. Remember, it's not just how many calories but when you consume them as well. Calories consumed earlier in the day, when our metabolism is naturally higher, can be burned off easier. As the sun sets, so too does our metabolism, and it just can't burn off the food as efficiently. Hence 100 calories late at night acts like 200 calories!

Planning is key to success for the emotional eater. Start the day with breakfast, write out your meals to ensure you've eaten at least 3 before dinner, then one more at dinner and you're set. That's it. **Your Mantra: I'm eating a good breakfast, and I've planned for a snack and for a lunch meal.**

You can't change something if you don't recognize it. So take a good look at your eating style. Once you identify your type, you're on your way to winning the battle of harmful eating for good!