

Practice Hunger Tolerance

Now that you have learned the difference between hunger, desire and cravings you are going to learn how to tolerate hunger.

Are you concerned about being hungry? Most people initially say “no” but when I suggest they practice going hungry, they become uncomfortable and anxious. They worry that they won’t be able to tolerate hunger.

When people who struggle with dieting get hungry, they often feel hunger pangs intensely: The sensation can *feel* like an emergency. All their attention gets focused on how uncomfortable they feel – and when and where they can get food. They begin to think, they won’t be able to stand feeling that way.

If you’ve had similar experiences, it’s important to learn that you can tolerate hunger. Once you effectively convince yourself of this, hunger won’t seem like such a big deal. When you’re hungry but it’s not time for a meal or a snack, you’ll be able to say to yourself, *“Oh well, I wish I could eat now, but it’s okay ... I can wait”*.

You’ll then be able to turn your attention to other things and the hunger pangs will gradually diminish. If you’ve never allowed yourself to feel hungry or very hungry, you might not believe me when I tell you that if you’re hungry and don’t respond immediately by eating, your hunger will definitely subside.

This task will help you see that you can tolerate hunger and that it comes and goes. Today or one day very soon (you can choose what works best with your schedule), I’d like you to purposely skip lunch. (Don’t do this if a medical condition, such as diabetes, required you to eat regularly). Doing this task will help you to realise that hunger is **not an emergency**. In fact I think you’ll find it’s not nearly as uncomfortable a sensation as you now believe.

If you fear hunger, you might routinely eat to avoid the feeling. You might never have learned that it's okay to feel hungry, or you might never have developed skills to help you withstand hunger. Purposely skipping a meal will prove something to you. **You definitely don't have to eat when you're hungry. Just because you want to eat doesn't mean you always should.** This is one of the most important things you need to learn to lose excess weight and to keep it off!

What To Do:

Pick a day this week to practice hunger tolerance. If you think it'll be challenging, choose a day when you know you'll be busy and you predict you won't be faced with difficult eating triggers. You might find a workday or a day where you have a structured routine will help you refrain from eating until dinnertime.

To help you put the discomfort of hunger in perspective, reflect on past non-hunger-related experiences that were uncomfortable. Use the attachment **"My Discomfort Scale"** and fill in several points, with 0 representing a situation in which you experienced no discomfort and 10 representing a situation in which you had the most extreme discomfort you've ever experienced.

Here's an example chart:

Discomfort Level	Situation
0	Sitting watching TV after eating dinner
1	
2	
3	When I went on a job interview
4	
5	Waiting for exam results
6	
7	
8	Getting a filling at the dentist
9	
10	When I sprained my ankle

You'll use this scale to rate how uncomfortable your hunger gets on the day you decide to skip lunch. Make sure to create this scale; you're going to need it to complete your next task too.

Going Hungry

On the day you practice feeling hungry, every hour you're going to track how uncomfortable you feel on the attached **"My Hungry Discomfort Chart"**. Most clients find that their hunger never got above 4 on the discomfort scale and that they were absolutely able to tolerate it.

On the day you choose, eat breakfast and then purposely don't eat again until dinner. At the time you normally eat lunch, figure out how uncomfortable (not how hungry) you are and write your rating on **"My Hungry Discomfort Chart"**. Then every hour or so between lunch and dinner, rate how strong your discomfort is at that very moment. Also reflect on how the previous hour went and record how high or low your discomfort was.

What are you thinking?

During your hunger experiment, you might need to repeatedly confront sabotaging thoughts, such as *"I don't want to keep doing this ... This is too uncomfortable"*. Remind yourself that there have been times in your life when you've been hungry but survived: when you fasted for a medical procedure or 24 hour charity fast, when you couldn't eat because you were delayed in traffic, or when service was extremely slow in a restaurant. You'll always survive because ***hunger is never an emergency.***

Sabotaging Thought: I should eat when I'm hungry. Isn't that what everyone does?

Helpful Response: Most people don't eat every time they're hungry. They wait until their next meal. I need to learn that skill, too.

Sabotaging Thought: Why should I deliberately make myself feel uncomfortable by skipping lunch?

Helpful Response: I need to experience hunger to decrease my fear of it. This experiment will help reduce my anxiety about hunger in the future. The best way to get over my fear is to face it. This experiment will strengthen me for the next time I'm hungry and it's not time to eat.

Overcome Cravings

Have you ever had the experience where food seems to be calling out to you... *eat me, eat me, eat me...?* I certainly have and so have most of my clients. The good news is that even though foods might continue to call out to you, you can stay in control.

Cravings usually peak within the first few weeks of your new eating plan. Once you limit or stop eating the foods you crave, your cravings for those foods will diminish significantly. Today, you'll learn how to deal with cravings effectively and decisively.

If you've successfully dieted in the past, you might remember how wonderful it feels when you stop experiencing intense cravings. To weaken the intensity and reduce the frequency of cravings however, you have to stop giving in to them.

People who struggle with dieting usually find that they don't limit themselves to just a small taste of the food they crave; even though they try to eat just a little, they end up eating a lot. Have you also found that cravings don't usually go away by trying to satisfy them with just a taste? Waiting out a craving increases your ability to tolerate cravings and also increases your confidence that you can do so. **The more often you wait out your cravings, the less intense and less frequent they'll be in the future.** Eventually, you'll experience a craving, and, instead of feeling bad, you'll feel good. You'll spontaneously say to yourself, *"This is great ... I'm feeling a craving, but I know I can tolerate it and it'll go away ... It's great that I'm tolerating it!"* Instead of feeling deprived, you'll feel good – proud, strong, confident, in control. Sticking to your food plan will get so much easier.

To get to that point, however, you first must learn how to respond to your cravings. This is actually simpler than many people realize. **Cravings start to diminish the moment you decide you're absolutely not going to stray from your diet.** They increase when you're indecisive about whether or not you eat.

This week you'll learn how to prove to yourself that you don't have to give in to cravings to make them disappear. You can take control and make them go away. First, you'll collect information about your cravings so you can demonstrate this to yourself. Then you'll learn anti-craving techniques.

Discovering that you **can** tolerate cravings is one of the most important things you need to learn to lose weight and keep it off.

How to measure your cravings

Your next craving might surface today, tomorrow or a few weeks from now. When it does, I'd like you to fill out the attached **"My Cravings Rating Chart"** with the following information:

- ✓ How long your craving lasts
- ✓ How uncomfortable it is on the discomfort scale (0-10)
- ✓ Which anti-craving techniques you used

When I filled my own **"My Cravings Rating Chart"** I discovered that my cravings weren't as painful as I had predicted. I also found that the sooner I convinced myself that I wasn't going to eat and got involved in other activities, the sooner the cravings went away.

Here is a sample of my chart:

Day/Time	Monday 3pm	Monday 7pm	Monday 9:30pm
How uncomfortable did the craving get on my discomfort scale? (0-10)	6	3	2
How long did it last?	10 min	4 min	2 min
What anti-craving techniques did I try?	Did the mind-set techniques: left the room: relaxed breathing: got back to work	Did the mind-set techniques; drank a glass of water: e-mailed a friend.	Did the mind-set techniques: put leftover food in the bin.

Before you fill out your own **"My Cravings Rating Chart"** you will need to learn the "Anti-Craving Strategies," including mind-set techniques and behavioural techniques.

My Cravings Rating Chart

Use My Discomfort Scale -- which you filled out yesterday, to help you rate how uncomfortable your cravings really are.

Day/Time			
How uncomfortable did the craving get on my discomfort scale? (0-10)			
How long did it last?			
What anti-craving techniques did I try?			
Day/Time			
How uncomfortable did the craving get on my discomfort scale? (0-10)			
How long did it last?			
What anti-craving techniques did I try?			

As part of this exercise, you'll fill out My Cravings Rating Chart, but first you need to learn anti-craving strategies, including mindset techniques and behavioral techniques.

My Discomfort Scale

Zero represents a situation in which you experienced no discomfort at all, and 10 represents a situation in which you had extreme discomfort.

Discomfort Level	Situation
0	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	