



Habit Interruption Strategies

Will this Nourish me or Punish me? How do I want to feel when I go to bed tonight? How do I want to sleep? How do I want to feel tomorrow morning?

2. Use your Delay, Distract, Decide sheet.

Remember a craving can pass within 20 minutes, and the brain can be distracted by something else. Your brain will also want to 'finish what you started' so when your alarm rings, your brain will be conflicted, remember finishing a task and crossing it off a list gives you a little dopamine hit! Then you can reward yourself with a nourishing snack and go to bed feeling really pleased with yourself. Not only did you not binge, but you also crossed something off your to-do list. That's a win-win.

3. Open your hand to re-open your mind

After each bite, put what you are eating down, or put down your fork or spoon, and flex your hand. By doing this, you are bringing the awareness of choice into your mind.

Every time you choose to pick the food or utensil up again, you are doing exactly that, making a choice. Mindless emotional eating comes with a death-grip, a clinging, a grasping. Mindfully release this death grip of tension around the food or utensil, in order to re-awaken yourself and become aware of what you are doing. Letting go of the food or utensil is a powerful metaphor for letting go of the stress or tension, or even the rush or panic to cope with stress or tension.

Try saying to yourself, "by letting go of this food, I let go of the panic I feel to cope. I can cope with my feelings. My feelings cannot kill me."

4. Eat with your non-dominant hand

Move the food or fork or spoon over to your non-dominant hand. This will simply make the act of eating more awkward, and again serves to shake you out of auto-pilot.

5. Eat with a different utensil, or use a utensil when you normally don't

Utensils provide utility, utility is 'useful' and mindless. We are interested instead now in awkwardness, which keeps us awake and out of autopilot Use a fork instead of a spoon. Use a spoon or fork instead of your fingers – for popcorn for example. Use chopsticks. Use a plastic knife or fork instead of metal. Or use your fingers instead of a fork or spoon.

6. Re-position your Body to Re-position your Mind

If you eat in front of the fridge, or standing at the counter in the kitchen, then put the food on a plate and sit at the table. If you sit in a particular chair or spot on the couch, move to another chair or seat, preferably the most uncomfortable one in the room, or sit on the floor. If you sit on the floor, then sit on the couch or a chair instead. If you use a tray, don't use it. If you use the coffee table, sit somewhere you can't reach it.

7. Relocate your Body to Relocate your Mind

If you normally eat emotionally in the kitchen, move to the dining room or living room, in an unfamiliar chair. If you normally bring your emotional eating upstairs or to a bedroom, then stay in the kitchen and sit at the table. If you do it in the living room in front of the TV, then go to the kitchen, or your office, or sit in the hall. Or turn off the TV and eat in silence – a biggie!

8. Outside the House

The car is a very popular eating spot for many clients, especially if you drive a lot during the day either for work or as a busy parent. Here are your habit interruption strategies for when you are out and about:

Put your handbag into the boot of the car.

Take your wallet out of your handbag and put that somewhere else in the boot.

Take your cards out of your wallet and only bring the smallest amount of cash you think you will need on that journey or for the day, or don't bring any money at all.

Drive home by a different route, so you are not passing your familiar food buying shops and have to be more alert as you are less familiar with that route.

Change the channel on the radio that you normally listen to in the car, or swap the radio for your music, or swap your usual music for talk radio.

Sign up to Audible and get the books I suggest, to listen to in the car instead of what you normally listen to.

9. Socialising

Eat properly all day before a night out to keep your gut and metabolism working properly and have a good nutritionally dense snack between 4-6pm, depending on what time you will be eating later.

Wear clothes that fit you properly, wear underwear that fits you properly, take time to do your hair and nails, or go and get them done. Look the best you can for yourself, as you are right now.

Remind yourself that your friends will not be looking at the label on your dress or jeans, and they really don't care about what you look like, they invited you because they like YOU. If you have a friend who tends to comment on your weight, remind yourself that this is HER hang up, not yours. You (and others) are triggering something in HER that is causing her to react this way.

If it helps, go online and review the menu before you go, pick out what you will eat, then begin to look forward to it – this is very helpful for some people as it takes a lot of stress and worry about 'what will I eat?' out of the situation. Then you can go and not even look at the menu if you wish, just say "I know what I'm having", and relax!

If you know a lot of alcohol is not helpful for you – whether it means kebabs on the way home, or a day on the sofa the next day eating crap, then switch your drink to something lower in alcohol, and intersperse drinks with water – a Ballygowan with ice and lemon looks like a vodka & tonic! If you have a friend who doesn't drink a lot, agree to just stay in a round with her instead of your hardcore friends.

10. Mindful Eating

Remember our first habit interruption strategy, the question "will this nourish me or punish me?". Always include this question in any decision you are making to either eat, or not eat.

© Eating Freely Ltd. No part of this program or associated materials may be re-produced or used without permission. Company Registration Number (Ireland): 636445. www.eatingfreely.com

Eating mindfully will help considerably in preventing overeating or bingeing.

So prepare your food mindfully, look forward to it.

Set the table (rare these days), and maybe put on your favourite relaxing music.

When your food is ready, serve yourself a normal portion of food onto a plate, and bring the plate to the table, away from any leftover food.

Eat your food slowly, tasting every mouthful. Remind yourself that you are nourishing yourself by eating good food, you are supporting your gut, supporting your hormone production, supporting your own good mood, supporting your sleep.

When you are finished, remind yourself that it is good for your digestion to take a break. So even if you are tempted to have more, allow your meal to settle first. If you are still genuinely hungry in 30 minutes time, then you can go and have more. But in the meantime, put what was left, away, and tidy up the kitchen after your meal.

If you go back later to have more, go back to the very beginning of this exercise! Ask yourself “will this nourish me or punish me?” “How do I want to feel when I go to bed tonight? How do I want to sleep? How do I want to feel when I wake up in the morning?”

A significant amount of the behaviours you currently have are simply Habits or Autopilots. These guidelines help to jolt the brain out of its Autopilots and stop to consider if what you are doing is actually helpful, or just habit. Once the brain gets into the new groove of Health and Wellbeing as the goal, the Nourish vs Punish choice will become your new normal.

11. Reduce the Stress that is Driving the Craving

Have an Epsom salts bath or foot bath. Epsom salts are full of magnesium, they help to drain excess cortisol, the stress hormone, out of your body. Add just 2-3 drops of lavender oil for additional relaxation and pampering. You will sleep really well after this. One theory suggests that a craving for chocolate is actually just a craving for magnesium...

Other Habit Interruption Strategies I can Use: