

# CRAVING AND CAVING

WORKING THROUGH  
EMOTIONAL EATING





# Cheat vs. Treat

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Okay, it happened. You knew what you were "supposed" to do. You had every intention of staying on plan, or just having a small treat, but for whatever reason it turned into an off-the-rails binge fest. Instead of feeling like it was a mindful and enjoyed indulgence, you feel out of control, guilty and disappointed. What's next? You try your best but you still can't "get control"- what's wrong with you?

First of all, you aren't alone. Everyone struggles with what we call "craving and caving" at times. Everyone uses unhealthy coping strategies- food, alcohol, shopping, social media- to avoid uncomfortable feelings. The key is to isolate the triggers for the behavior- the circumstances, thoughts and feelings that caused you to over indulge. Once you've isolated what caused the emotional response, you can find ways to replace the behavior with healthier thoughts and actions. You can develop a plan.

Will you ever be able to live a life where you never overdo it?

Probably not. Everyone has moments when they make choices that don't serve them. The key is to reduce the frequency and severity of these moments by replacing them with thoughts and habits that help keep you on track.

Take some time to dissect what happened, without guilt or judgment. Just be curious about what you were thinking and feeling at the time, and how you could change that situation in the future.


No guilt- this is part of the process.

*xoxo*

*Robyn + Megan*

# Behavior Worksheet

What were the physical circumstances? Who were you with, what was your day like, etc




What thoughts were going through your mind?




What feelings were in your body? (Tension, anger, fear, exhaustion, etc)



What did you do?



How did you feel afterward?



# Responding to an Urge

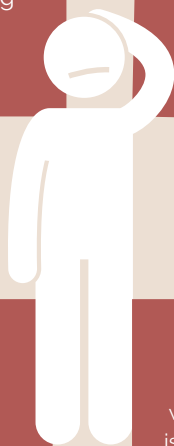
It's 10pm after a long day and you are desperate for your nightly bowl of popcorn and glass of wine in front of the TV. You had a satisfying dinner and aren't really hungry but you're desperate to decompress.



Grab the popcorn, bust open the bottle opener and go for it. You feel the urge, and you reach for the easy reward and feel better. The upside is, yes, it is efficient. Downside is it reinforces the cycle of quick reward and pulls you away from your goals. You're managing your feelings with food.



White Knuckle Resist It- You can sit there in misery, torturing yourself about how badly you want it but how you just can't. This feels like tension, self-punishment and deprivation. It's depressing and exhausting.



Distract Yourself- Sometimes this isn't a bad option. You go clean your kitchen, you go upstairs to turn in early, you start online shopping- but you don't cave to the urge.

This is a better option because you aren't reinforcing the habit, and can be super helpful, particularly in the beginning as you rewire your brain.

Peacefully allow the urge- Instead of fighting the urge or busying yourself, what if you just recognized it for what it is? What if you just said, "Wow, it's 10pm and my kids/spouse/boss/client really drove me crazy today. I'm used to using food to feel better after a bad day so no wonder I have a craving! The popcorn will always be there, and I can choose to eat it, but right now I choose not to so I can train my brain not to need it. It's ok I had a tough day- food doesn't fix it."



How would you prefer to feel?

What can you tell yourself next time this craving arises? (i.e. treats will always be there, right now I'm taking care of my body")

What can you do next time this craving arises? (i.e. bring along a compliant treat, fix yourself a small portion and sit down to enjoy it, give away trigger foods to a neighbor)



# Shift Your Mindset

Fears or Negative Thoughts about "Dieting", weight loss or eating healthy



A large, empty white rectangular box intended for writing down fears or negative thoughts about dieting, weight loss, or eating healthy.

REPLACEMENT EMPOWERING thoughts or feelings about eating healthful foods



A large, empty white rectangular box intended for writing down replacement empowering thoughts or feelings about eating healthful foods.

# Foods I Love to Eat

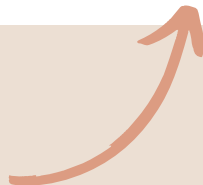
Foods that are nutritious and good for my body that I enjoy:



Foods that are "bad" (we hate that word) or less nutritious that I love to eat:



Ask your coach to makeover one of your favorite treats!  
Brownies, fried chicken, pizza-  
we've done it all.





# Reward Yourself

What goals can you set this week and month, and how can you reward yourself for achieving them?

Goals should be measurable and attainable- both short and long term. Rewards can be big or small depending on how much you'd like to challenge yourself- but they should not be food.

## Goals:

ex) I will walk 2 miles every day this week.

## Rewards:

ex) I will treat myself to a new pair of jeans this weekend

# Find Your Triggers

If you look back at the times you over ate or over drank, it is likely they had one common trigger or cue. Every time you have a mishap, write the answer below. Eventually you will see some common themes. These are your triggers and times you need to act preventatively.

What Time Is It??

Where Are You?

Who Are You With?

What Did you just do?

How are you Feeling  
Physically and  
Emotionally?

# Plan Your Reward

When

(TRIGGER)

happens I will...

This is a better choice because...

# Break The Cycle

## *Example: At a Cocktail Party*

### **Trigger Feelings:**

Wanting to "join" wanting to indulge, feeling socially awkward and wanting to relax



### **Craving:**

Cocktail to relax, Sugary dessert to "indulge"

Trigger/Cue

Craving



Reward/  
Result

Habit



### **Reward:**

Temporarily you relax and feel the release of dopamine. Later- feel dehydrated, bloated regretful and sluggish. **If you can find an alternate habit that gives you the same reward (relaxation, dopamine), you can conquer your habit.**

**Habit:** Decide to have "just one drink". 20 minutes later you've added a piece of cake, nibbled off the cheese tray and had another cocktail