

MANAGING BODY IMAGE AND EATING HABITS

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING DURING A PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 crisis is a time of heightened stress for everyone, with a lot of unknowns. Routines are disrupted. People with busy lives are now stuck at home with much less to do and the loss of structure can be challenging. During times of stress, people automatically tend to revert to their past coping strategies which often include eating disorder behaviors.

WAYS TO MANAGE BODY IMAGE AND EXPECTATIONS OF YOURSELF DURING A PANDEMIC

- ❖ **Practice self-compassion:** If you eat something you didn't plan to eat, accept it and move on. You are not a failure for "slipping up". This is a time of uncertainty and we are all adjusting, so be kind to yourself.
- ❖ **Engage in positive self-talk:** positive self-talk can dramatically improve mood, boost self-confidence, and increase productivity. On the flip side, negative self-talk can put you in a bad mood and leave you feeling helpless.
- ❖ **Limit body checking:** This includes spending less time in the mirror and critiquing ways you may see your body changing. This can induce anxiety and make you feel worse about your body image.
- ❖ **Get dressed:** Spending all day at home with nowhere to go makes a great argument for staying in our pajamas all day. Though this is tempting, it can also make us feel lazy, unproductive, and even more out of routine. Simply getting dressed can help you feel better about yourself when you're stuck inside, while giving you a sense of normalcy.
- ❖ **Challenge diet culture:** Losing weight should be the least of our concerns right now. The idea that we need to be concerned with our weight in a time like this brings unnecessary stress to our lives when we should be focused on staying safe and healthy. Jokes such as gaining the "COVID-15" are made in poor taste and should be ignored.
- ❖ **Exercise:** Physical activity helps increase the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins. Getting movement in any form will not only make you feel good but will help relieve stress.
- ❖ **Practice gratitude:** Instead of stressing out about having to adapt to a new "normal" which is inevitable, try thinking about things you are grateful for. Examples include: your health, food to eat (which many people are struggling with), and time-slowness down.
- ❖ **Reframe your situation:** We are in the middle of a pandemic where people are dying, in ICU, losing loved ones, and having to self-isolate from family and friends to save others. If we make it through this and the WORST thing that happens is we gain a few pounds or lose a little muscle, we certainly have come out on the luckier end of the spectrum.

TIPS FOR MANAGING MINDLESS EATING WHILE STUCK AT HOME

- ❖ **Ease your stress:** If stress contributes to your mindless eating, try a stress management technique, such as yoga, meditation or deep breathing.
- ❖ **Practice mindful eating:** Paying attention to our food, on purpose, moment by moment, without judgment. It is about developing awareness of your experiences, physical cues, and feelings about food.
- ❖ **Have a hunger check:** Is your hunger physical or emotional? If you ate just a few hours ago and don't have a rumbling stomach, you're probably not hungry. Give the craving time to pass.
- ❖ **Fight boredom:** Instead of snacking when you're not hungry, distract yourself and substitute a healthier behavior. Take a walk, watch a movie, play with your cat, listen to music, read, surf the internet or call a friend.
- ❖ **Take away temptation:** Don't keep hard-to-resist comfort foods in your home. And if you feel angry or blue, postpone your trip to the grocery store until you have your emotions in check.
- ❖ **Don't deprive yourself:** Eat satisfying amounts of healthier foods, enjoy an occasional treat and get plenty of variety to help curb cravings.
- ❖ **Snack healthy:** If you feel the urge to eat between meals, choose a healthy snack, such as fresh fruit, vegetables, nuts or popcorn. Or try lower calorie versions of your favorite foods to see if they satisfy your craving.
- ❖ **Learn from setbacks:** Focus on the positive changes you're making in your eating habits and give yourself credit for making changes that'll lead to better health.
- ❖ **Work with what you have:** Your diet may look different depending on what grocery stores have in stock. Try new foods and be flexible with your options. Remember: this isn't going to last forever.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

❖ **Savello Health App:** On-demand help with stress, anxiety and depression

- FREE premium access during the COVID-19 crisis

❖ **Headspace App:** Guided meditation app

- To help support you through this time of crisis, they're offering some meditations you can listen to anytime. These are part of a larger collection in the Headspace app — free for everyone — called Weathering the storm. It includes meditations, sleep, and movement exercises to help you out, however you're feeling.

❖ **Fitness Blender:** Fitness channel on YouTube

- 600 free workout videos all varying in length and difficulty
- These are a great FREE resource to get in movement while stuck at home

6 Ways to Practice Mindful Eating

Mindless Eating

- 1** Eating past full and ignoring your body's signals
- 2** Eating when emotions tell us to eat (i.e., sad, bored, lonely)
- 3** Eating alone, at random times and places
- 4** Eating foods that are emotionally comforting
- 5** Eating and multitasking
- 6** Considering a meal an end product

Mindful Eating

- Listening to your body and stopping when full
- Eating when our bodies tell us to eat (i.e., stomach growling, energy low)
- Eating with others, at set times and places
- Eating foods that are nutritionally healthy
- When eating, just eating
- Considering where food comes from

