



IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH *food*

Want to find out what your food trap is?
Take the quiz below, then read on to
discover how to break up with your
bad food habits – for good.

1 When stressed, I:

- A Reach for chocolates, chips or lollies.
- B Chat to a friend.
- C Exercise in the fresh air.

2 When sad, I:

- A Devour a tub of ice-cream.
- B Run a hot bath and soak in the bubbles.
- C Write about my feelings in a journal.

3 I frequently eat:

- A On the run, at my desk, or while watching TV.
- B Out, because I haven't planned any meals.
- C At the dining table with no distractions.

**4 I pay attention to my
hunger signals:**

- A Rarely.
- B Sometimes.
- C All the time.

How did you go?

If you answered

Mostly As It might be a good time to reassess your eating habits. Consider seeking the support of an accredited practising dietitian or a psychologist to get to the root of your emotional eating habits so you can be in control.

Mostly Bs Your eating habits could do with some tweaking. Try planning your meals and snacks ahead and tracking what you eat, or jump online at weightwatchers.com.au and chat with a Coach for support.

Mostly Cs Good on you! Continue practising mindful eating and acknowledging your feelings and emotions in healthy ways and that will help you stay on track. >

Turn over for expert advice on how to beat bad eating habits.

If you... Eat for comfort

"When we eat for comfort, it's often because we want to distract ourselves from our feelings," says clinical psychologist Dr Cindy Nour. "It's a negative coping mechanism in response to a negative emotion." About 50 per cent of us eat in response to difficult feelings. While it can make you feel better momentarily, Dr Nour suggests you consider how much true comfort you really get from it, how long it actually lasts, and how much guilt you feel later.

"It's important to learn to sit with our emotions, tolerate the potential discomfort, and accept what comes up," she says. Look for other ways to self-soothe, such as walking or meditating, to help you feel better without turning to food.

Your action plan:

- Move to a quiet place, sit down and take a few deep breaths to centre and calm yourself.
- Grab a pen and paper and interview yourself. Ask: What emotion am I feeling now? What does it make me want to do? Why do I want to do it? How will I feel after I do it? What are three things I can do instead?

If you... Eat out of boredom

Weight Watchers member Ashlee Berryman, 27, lost 23kg, but before joining the Program, she used to eat when she was bored and procrastinate while studying. Her go-to food was chocolate. "If I'd get stuck writing an essay, or just needed a break, I'd go and have some chocolate. I didn't realise I was eating out of boredom," she explains.

When Ashlee started tracking, it helped her kick the habit. "I could see the **ProPoints** values adding up. Plus, writing it down made eating it real," she adds. Nowadays, if Ashlee's feeling bored, she'll have a glass of water or a piece of fruit. If she catches herself standing in front of the pantry procrastinating, she simply shuts the door. "I now savour dark chocolate (1 **ProPoints** value per square) at night, instead of eating lots of milk chocolate during the day."

Your action plan:

- Track all meals, snacks, bites, licks and tastes.
- Have pre-prepared snacks at home and take them with you when you're at work, uni, or on the go.
- Find a non-food way to distract yourself, like taking a walk.

If you... Eat more in social situations

Weight Watchers 2014 Diamond Coach of the Year, Karla Forsyth, says there are a few reasons why people tend to overindulge in social situations. "Often people eat to please others, or they haven't planned their **ProPoints** values for the occasion, or they're distracted so they're not keeping in mind what they're eating," says Karla.

Accredited practising dietitian and exercise physiologist Emily Burgess agrees. "In social situations, people just want to continue having a good time, so they discard their inhibitions. Alcohol can be a contributing factor to this too. Another reason people eat more in these circumstances is because they feel out of control; like they don't have ultimate control of the food, like they would if they were at home."

Your action plan:

- Plan meals and snacks ahead so you can use your extra 49 weekly **ProPoints** values wisely.
- Take a low **ProPoints** values dish to a party.
- Have a low **ProPoints** values bowl of soup before going out to a restaurant so you eat less when you get there.

If you... Eat more when you exercise

Research shows that people are prone to eating more after exercising – or even just after reading about exercise! Burgess explains that if you're new to exercise, or you've just increased the amount of exercise you do, you can feel hungrier in the first couple of weeks, but then this sensation settles. However, the real problem is that when people exercise, they feel as if they need, or deserve, more food.

"In most circumstances, they don't need any extra food," says Burgess. This is because exercising for weight loss is all about using up more energy than you're consuming. "You don't need to reward yourself with food for exercising," adds Burgess. "View exercise as a life priority and something you normally do each day – just like brushing your teeth – surely not something you reward yourself for!"

Your action plan:

- Drink plenty of water and eat a healthy snack after exercising, such as a piece of fruit.
- Change your view of exercise and look at it as a way to de-stress and clear your mind.

5 tricks to avoid mindless eating

1 Clean your teeth That minty fresh feeling helps tell you food time is over.

2 Introduce mindful eating habits Eat at the table, turn off the TV, put your phone away and pay attention to the smell, taste and look of the food. You'll gain more pleasure from meal times and a new respect for food.

3 Be thankful Take breaks between mouthfuls and put down your knife and fork every so often to chat with whoever you're eating with, or simply to take a moment to think about how good the food is and to feel grateful for it.

4 Get connected Call a friend, jump onto the Weight Watchers forums and talk to someone, right now!

5 Exercise! Exercising can help reduce stress and improve sleep quality, which in turn can result in a better mood and less chance of making poor food choices.



Keeping it real

Paying attention to your feelings makes a difference.

If you've been to the movies, chances are you've eaten mindlessly (ever wondered what happened to that bag of Maltesers that was full before the movie started?). Mindless eating is when you eat without paying attention to the eating experience. "It's the complete opposite of mindful eating, where you eat with all your senses, without judgment or guilt," says Burgess.

"Mindless eating is when people don't give a thought to how hungry or full they are," says Dr Nour. Mindless eating occurs while you're distracted, watching TV, busy at work, while you're multi-tasking, when you're bored, or just feeling emotional or alone. And the worst part: the most common foods eaten mindlessly are high in **ProPoints** values and low in nutrients, such as chocolate, biscuits and lollies.

The reason mindless eating can lead to overeating is because you're not paying attention to how much food you're eating. Physically, mindless eating and overeating lead to weight gain, but they also have emotional ramifications, too. "You can feel disappointed, guilty and ashamed," says Dr Nour. In turn, this can lead to restrictive eating, cutting foods out of your food plan, or even craving the same food tomorrow because you weren't paying attention when you ate it today. Paying attention helps you stay on track. ■