

calm, cool & collected

without calories



PROGRAM

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Hello, there!

Welcome to my Calm, Cool, and Collected Program. In this workbook, I will teach you 28 of my favorite ways to help you comfort and soothe yourself without food.



I'm Dr. Susan Albers. I'm a clinical psychologist who specializes in eating issues and has worked with clients just like you for over a decade. When I work with my clients, I not only help them make changes in the way they respond to food, I also help them look beyond the plate by offering practical tools to stay calm without taking one bite.

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The Goals for the Program:

- 1) Find healthy ways to deal with stress and daily life.
- 2) Discover free or low-cost ways to cope with difficult moments.
- 3) Cope with stress without turning to food, substances, electronics, or “zoning out.”
- 4) Gain confidence and inner peace.
- 5) Be more mindful of your everyday life and comfortable in that mindfulness.

Different Types of Stress

ARE YOU CALM & COLLECTED OR FRAZZLED & FATIGUED?

Answer this question:

It's 8 am. Your car just stalled, you spilled coffee on your new shirt, the school called to tell you your six-year-old is throwing up, and you're late for an important meeting at work.

How do you react?

Do you use your problem-solving skills to make the necessary phone calls and let work know you're going to be late, or do you go into full-on stress mode, stuffing down two doughnuts from the box you'd planned to bring to the meeting, and tell yourself this is “the worst day ever”?

When you drive to pick up your child, do the doughnuts and the subsequent guilt catch up with you and make you feel like *you're* going to be sick?

If so, you're not alone.

What makes one person respond calmly under stress while another becomes so frazzled, they turn to food for comfort? There are many reasons for this. The good news is you can retrain your brain to be more calm, cool, and collected by using certain tools. In this workbook, I will provide these tools and also give you access to 28 one-minute videos that will teach you how to keep calm even in the face of the most frustrating circumstances.

You can use this accompanying workbook to track your daily progress, response, and areas to keep working on.

Believe it or not, the food choices you make have more to do with how you handle stress than any other factor. Being calm, cool, and collected without digging into any comfort food whatsoever can be very difficult to do. After all, if you're an emotional eater, you may automatically crave food at the first sign of distress.

This reaction is so ingrained, you feel you have no more control over it than blushing or an urge to use the bathroom. This is why so many so-called “diet” programs don't work. It's because they focus on food intake instead of *why* the food is being consumed in the first place.

I created this 28-day program with you in mind:

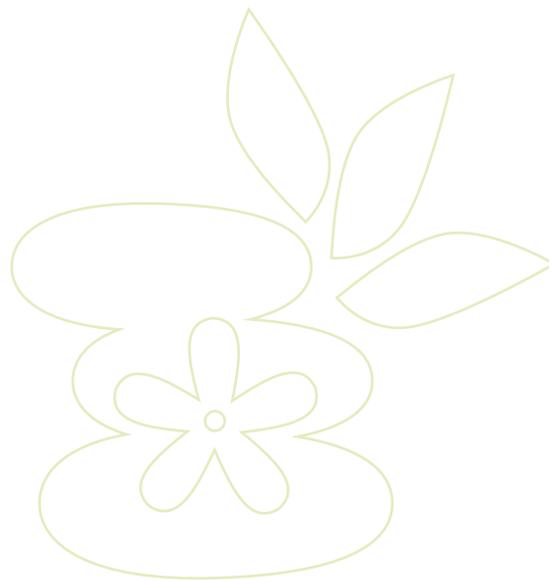
- The burn-the-candle-at-both-ends career type who never has time to sit down to a healthy meal.
- The frustrated parent who juggles too much at once.
- The unhappy person who has tried all the diets out there and then some, and *still* can't fit into their favorite pair of jeans.
- The teenager whose changing body makes him/her feel self-conscious and unsure.
- The woman who's coping with hormonal changes in addition to emotional eating.
- The individual who is coping with pain and uses food to ease aches and pains.

Each day, I encourage you to look beyond food by trying one simple new skill that has been clinically shown to help you be calmer. The more calm and in control you feel, the less you'll experience the urge to eat for emotional reasons.

In just three short weeks, you're going to experience a calmer, more rational-thinking mind. You will respond to stressful situations in a more mindful way and remain collected even in the face of the most frustrating challenges.

This program focuses on **you**, not food. As a matter of fact, I'm not even going to mention food very much.

Your only goal will be to practice these skills in all contexts, not just at the table. Once you learn these skills and put them into practice, they will become second nature to you, and when you feel stressed, you'll have plenty of healthy ways to manage that stress without taking a single bite (or even thinking about it)!



Are You Calm & Cool?

Let's start with this simple assessment:

- 1) **When I feel a little bit stressed, I eat rather than deal with the problem.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little *A lot*

- 2) **I get upset easily.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little *A lot*

- 3) **People tell me to chill out or calm down.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little *A lot*

- 4) **It's hard for me to let things go, I stew about them for a while.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little *A lot*

- 5) **My reactions to stressful situations are quick, immediate, and emotional.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little *A lot*

- 6) **I am prone to panic attacks or lots of worry.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little *A lot*

- 7) **I have difficulty sleeping at night.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little *A lot*

- 8) **I get into emotional arguments with others.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little *A lot*

- 9) **I do not have as much patience with my children, co-workers, family members, or friends as I would wish.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little *A lot*

10) **I get angry with my significant other or friends often.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little

A lot

11) **I yell and/or curse while driving.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little

A lot

12) **I experience heart palpitations.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little

A lot

13) **I experience tension headaches.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little

A lot

14) **My stomach hurts.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little

A lot

15) **My hands are shaky.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

A little

A lot

SCORING:

If you scored 1-30: This is great news! You are fairly calm on a day-to-day basis.

If you scored 31-60: You experience stress more often than not. Stress bothers you regularly and may be impacting your mood and relationships.

If you answered 61-75: You feel stressed often. Stress may be impacting your health and well-being. If this sounds like you, don't worry!

EMOTIONAL BINGO

Have you ever played bingo? This historical lottery game dates back to the year 1530 when Italy was united. The Italian National Lottery Lo Giuoco del Lotto d'Italia was organized and has been held, almost without pause, at weekly intervals to this date. The game is simple; each time a number is called, you put a chip on a corresponding space.

The game was brought to modern times by a New York toy salesman by the name of Edwin S. Lowe. On an evening in December of 1929, he decided to drive to Jacksonville, Georgia so he could have an early start on his next day's appointments.

As Lowe headed to his destination, he pulled over when he spotted the bright lights of a country carnival. Since he was already ahead of schedule, he figured he would have nothing to lose by checking it out. As it would turn out, he had everything to gain.

He noticed all the booths were closed except one, which appeared to be packed with people. As Lowe watched, the pitchman pulled out small numbered wooden disks from an old cigar box and call a number aloud.

The players eagerly checked their cards to see if they had the matching number. If they did, they would place dried beans in a sequence until one line of the card was completely filled in—either horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

The first player who called out “Beano” was the winner of a small Kewpie doll.

After seeing how excited the crowd got at playing this game, Lowe decided to bring it back to New York with him. He bought some dried beans, a rubber numbering stamp, and some cardboard and decided to try the game out on his friends. He was thrilled to discover that they played with the same excitement as the players in Florida.

During one session, Lowe noticed a particular player who was excitedly adding more beans to her card. When he called the last number, the woman jumped up, and instead of shouting, “Beano”, stammered out the word “B-b-b-bingo!”

Lowe was so swept up in her excitement that he knew the game would be a smashing success. The earliest of the games came in two variations. One was a twelve-card set, which could be purchased for one dollar, and the other was a twenty-four card set sold for two dollars.

You may be wondering, “How is a game of bingo supposed to keep me calm?”

Well, I designed a special bingo board just for you, with 28 techniques designed specifically to help retrain your brain so you can gain more control of your emotions and live a happier, healthier life.

I think it is the perfect tool because it helps you to have a plan and options handy whenever you need them. Some days, you may struggle more with stressful thoughts like “I can’t stand this!” while other days you may find yourself stomping around your office. You need to find the right intervention to deal with the triggers as they come.

In this program, I will walk you through a number of alternatives ranging from positive self-talk to mindfulness meditation and everything in between.



INSTRUCTIONS:

When you get the urge to emotionally eat, use this bingo board, or create your own list of alternatives that might work for you.

C (Cool Thoughts)	A (Action)	L (Letting Go)	M (Mindfulness)
Distancing For Thoughts	Laughing	Catch & Release	Compassion Meditation
Refocus & Reframe	Journaling	Soothing Affirmations & Positive Self-Talk	Urge Surfing
Grounding Techniques	Self-Massage	Worry Thoughts	Staying in the Present Moment
Counting Your Senses	The Power Pose	Rituals	Meditation
Soothing Your Senses	5-5-5-5-Exercise	Ease & Please Your Senses	Mentally SIT
Critical To Curious	Mindful Stretching	Soothing Senses	Squeegee Breath
Letting Go of Zebra Thinking	Smiling	Power Posing	Healthy Eating Mantra

The type of exercise you choose will depend on what thoughts or cravings you're dealing with at that moment.

Although you can use any exercise at any time, each is specifically geared to help you through a certain type of difficult moment so you can manage without turning to food.

If you have these thoughts, try a COOL THOUGHTS exercise:

- "I've already messed it up, I might as well eat whatever I want."
- "I'm so angry, I don't care what I eat."
- "I'm so stressed out, I can't think about eating healthier right now."
- "What's the use?"
- "Food is calling my name, I NEED it!"
- "I have terrible PMS."
- "I'm stuck in traffic, and nobody knows how to drive!"
- "My significant other and I had a fight, and I need something to calm me down."
- "My family/children/friends are driving me nuts."
- "I'm WAY too busy. I don't even have time to think, let alone eat healthily."

If you have these actions, try an ACTION exercise:

- Eating food to entertain yourself
- Lying on the couch and munching on food
- Yelling
- Acting before you think
- Eating chocolate because you're sad
- Spending money mindlessly
- Drinking alcohol to excess
- Biting your fingernails

If you have these thoughts, try a LETTING GO exercise:

- "I can't sleep. I can't seem to turn my mind off!"
- "I am so upset, I'm calming my nerves with food, substances, and the Internet."
- "I can't let go of an argument I had with a friend."
- "I'm concerned about the future of my job."
- "My significant other and I have been fighting a lot lately."
- "I embarrassed myself in the meeting today."
- "This is the second time I've turned in a project late."
- "My sister is coming to visit this weekend, and she's very critical. I can't stop worrying about what she will think."
- "I have a doctor's appointment coming up, and I know she'll mention my weight."
- "A man shouted something derogatory at me while I was getting in my car, and I can't seem to shake it off."

If you have these feelings, try a MINDFULNESS exercise:

- "I am always struggling with food, and I get very mad at myself for overeating."
- "My mind is always focused on the bad things that have happened in the past."
- "I am very sensitive."
- "I get upset very easily."
- "When I eat, I numb out."
- "I go through a whole bag of chips before the movie even starts."
- "All I think about is food."
- "I fear that my weight makes my partner disinterested in me romantically."

A Brief History of Comfort

We didn't always have all the comforting luxuries we do now. In bygone eras, the primary focus was on daily survival needs like food, clothing, and shelter. There wasn't room for or even a thought of anything else. There were two options: expensive luxury products with ornate design and the basic functional versions.

Over time, as society progressed and trade became more common, new products became available. All of a sudden, the options of what type of chair to put in your home went from one to twenty. The middle class created a new category that focused not on luxury or necessity but comfort. The chair you choose would be based on how good it felt to sit in it.

The term comfort, which had previously only meant the "aid" or "consolation" of a loved one, came into fashion as a term that expressed enjoyment of feeling and being satisfied with one's surroundings.

The rise of comfort not only brought with it a sense of individuality, it made the middle class (who were once poor) more interested in helping others overcome their own poverty and oppression.

Today, there are many products that focus on bringing us higher and better levels of comfort—beds, shoes, pillows, robes, spas, bigger seats on airplanes etc. People pay more for items that bring them relaxation.



Relaxation Around the World

5 QUIRKY WAYS PEOPLE REDUCE STRESS

Stress relief doesn't mean the same thing for everyone. As a matter of fact, some people do some pretty quirky things in the name of relaxation.

Here are 5 unusual ways people reduce stress:

1. Throwing Dinner Plates into a Wall

Have you ever been so angry you just felt like throwing something? Well, in parts of Japan, you can! Not only is it not frowned upon, it's actually encouraged as a healthy way to relieve stress.

The Venting Place, located in the Akihabara shopping district of Tokyo, will allow you to take your angry and hurt feelings out on dinner plates for a small fee. You can choose either three small dishes as your projectiles or sink all your money into one medium-sized plate.

As a safety precaution, all venters must wear protective goggles so they don't take shrapnel in the eye.

I don't know about you, but I think throwing dishes at a wall in a safe, structured environment like this is a healthy way to vent frustrations. It's much better than stuffing your feelings down with food, alcohol, gambling, or other addictions.

However, this is not an option when you are in your own kitchen. In your everyday environment, you can't throw things!

2. Fish Pedicure

Even if you're familiar with the pedicure, you've probably never seen something like this before. In Kuala Lumpur's Kenko Spa in Malaysia, you can get both a foot massage and a pedicure—from a school of fish.

That's right.

You can dip your feet into a pool, and hundreds of "doctor fish" will cover your feet, nibbling away at the dead skin while secreting an enzyme called diathanol, which stimulates the skin regeneration process. When the experience is over, about 30 minutes later, your feet feel soft, smooth, and clean.

3. Dolphin-Assisted Therapy

Dolphins are intelligent and majestic creatures, and many humans enjoy swimming with them.

In the late 1970s, a clinical psychologist named Dr. David Nathanson found that children with Down syndrome, who were rewarded with the opportunity to swim with dolphins, learned four times faster and remembered what they've learned far better than in a traditional classroom setting.

Dr. Nathanson became one of the primary movers in a technique called 'Dolphin Human Therapy', also known as Dolphin-Assisted Therapy.

While the efficacy of this therapy for children with developmental disabilities is still open for debate, one study suggests swimming with dolphins can be an effective way to treat depression. (<http://www.bmj.com/content/331/7527/1231.short>).

4. (Stopped Here - Paper Rater)

Multiple studies have linked having pets and being around animals regularly to feelings of calm, so it only stands to reason that swimming with dolphins, if nothing else, would be soothing to the senses.

5. Sensory Deprivation/Isolation Tank

For someone with claustrophobia, lying in the confines of an isolation tank would be torture. For others, however, it is a meditative way to achieve deep relaxation.

Spending time in the tank is said to turn down the sympathetic nervous system (the “fight-or-flight” part of your brain), while turning up the parasympathetic nervous system, which is associated with rest.

The experience of an isolation tank (also called “restricted environmental stimulation technique”, or REST, has been shown to help floaters battle anxiety and depression (<http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/2002-10533-002>), lower blood pressure, quit smoking (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0306460387900372>), and even effectively manage chronic pain (<http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/2002-10533-002>).

6. Thai Massage

Thai massage is different from other massage techniques you may have tried in the past. Instead of relaxing on a table while the therapist gives you a massage, Thai massage is far more interactive.

Your therapist will use a combination of energy work, traditional pressure point techniques, and tugging and pulling on different areas of your body to help you achieve realignment.

Some people who have tried Thai massage report feeling sore during or shortly after the treatment, but seem to feel much better the next day.

Expensive Products Purchased in the Name of Relaxation

Not only do people find unusual ways to relax, they also buy expensive products to help them settle and ease their anxiety.

Examples of these include:

- Jacuzzis
- Swimming Pools
- Electronics
- High-Priced Vacations
- New Car
- New Clothes
- Luxury Spa Trips

There's nothing wrong with purchasing any of these items in and of itself. Whether or not they are good for you depends on your motivation. If you want a swimming pool for you and your family to enjoy in the summer, that's great. If your car has broken down several times, and you need a new one, investing in a new car makes sense.

However, if you are purchasing items for the sole purpose of comfort and easing anxiety, you're following the same pattern as mindless eating. In other words, to avoid feeling a certain way or alleviate an emotion, you turn to mindless buying.

The good news about this program is it doesn't require sensory deprivation, someone (literally) pulling your leg, or buying expensive products. Furthermore, you can take these tools with you wherever you go!

I've devised this 28-day C.A.L.M. technique so you can practice in your own familiar surroundings using everyday tools and techniques you may already be practicing with now.

In this workbook, I will guide you through a gradual, step-by-step process that will help retrain your mind and refocus your energy so you can feel calm, cool, and collected without turning to food for comfort.

By the end of this program, your comfort food cravings will have significantly diminished, and your confidence levels will soar.

The great thing about my 28-day program is you don't have to do these techniques in order, and you can skip over the ones you think may not work for you. You can even combine techniques to create your own customized program!

This workbook is organized into four main sections:

1. Cool Thoughts

In the first part of this workbook, I will teach you some ‘cool thoughts’ exercises to use when your mind becomes filled with negative thoughts or unnecessary food cravings. Some of the techniques in this section include: Distancing, Grounding, and Soothing.

2. Action

In the second part of this workbook, we will move into ‘action’. These techniques will help you use both your mind and body to trade habits that no longer serve you for exercises that calm the mind, invigorate the body, and soothe the senses. Some of the techniques outlined in this section include: Laughter Yoga, Massage, and the “5-5-5-5” Exercise.

3. Letting Go

In the third part of this workbook, we will practice ‘letting go’. I’ve designed these techniques to help you release negative thought patterns that may stem from your past.

When you let go, you’ll receive the gift of confidence that will keep you in a state of optimism, knowing your true worth and never settling for anything less. The techniques in this section include: The Catch and Release Method, Soothing Affirmations, and Worrying Mindfully.

4. Mindfulness

Perhaps the most soothing part of this workbook is the ‘mindfulness’ section. I talk a lot about eating mindfully, but if you’re not in the habit of practicing mindfulness, it can be difficult to picture just what to do. In this section,

some of the techniques I’ll show you will include: Compassion Meditation, Mantra Meditation, and the Squeegee Breath.

The 28-Day C.A.L.M. Technique

COOL THOUGHTS

When emotions get in the way of rational thinking, we tend to react instead of act. “Hot thoughts” are thoughts that arise from a strong emotion. For example, “I’m so fat” or “I’ll never lose weight” or “The stress in my life makes me eat this way”. These emotionally-charged phrases are like flashing neon signs in your brain. They blot out all reason and make you act impulsively.

Cool thoughts, on the other hand, are like the soothing, blue waves of the ocean. They slowly make their way ashore in your mind, embracing and pulling negative thoughts back out to sea. In this section, we’ll look at some of the ways you can change those hot thoughts into cool thoughts, so you remain calm, steady, and in control.



Me, Myself & I Distancing

KNOW THIS:

Highly-charged emotional thoughts automatically create tension in your body and judgment in your mind. The more thoughts you have like this, the more difficult it is to stay positive and achieve your goals.

Observing is a key concept of mindfulness. It is stepping aside from your feelings and simply watching them without judgment. It is like

watching yourself on a movie screen. Stepping aside from your emotions help you to tone them down.

EXAMPLE:

Let's go back to the "I'm so fat" thought again. A thought like this may make you feel angry, depressed, queasy, anxious, or tense.

DO THIS:

This doesn't mean you should try to block thoughts like this out of your head. That doesn't really work. After all, if I tell you not to think of a tap-dancing snake in a top hat, that's the first thing you'll picture.

STEP ONE:

Instead of "I'm so fat", distance yourself from the thought as though you are an impartial observer. Something like, "Oh, I see I'm having the thought that I am so fat again." When you distance yourself in this way, it helps cool down the emotion associated with the thought and reminds you that a thought is just that, a thought.

Just because your mind is trying to sell it to you doesn't mean you have to buy it.

STEP TWO - (THE SECOND OR THIRD-PERSON TECHNIQUE):

Studies have shown that shifting from the first-person ("I") to the third-person (your name or "you"), can cool down the hot feelings that may lead to emotional eating.

For example, instead of saying "I'm so fat", distance yourself from the thought by saying, "You are not happy with your current weight. You would like to lose weight and get healthy" or "Cynthia feels uncomfortable at her current weight. She would feel more confident if she were to shed the pounds in a safe, healthy way."



Reframe and Refocus

KNOW THIS:

Research has shown that distracting yourself from food cravings can be a very successful tool. Also, just because you want to distract yourself doesn't mean you have to get up and go for a walk, put together a puzzle, or play a game. It can be as simple as distracting yourself with a thought.

EXAMPLE:

You're sitting at your desk at work and the doughnuts left over from this morning's meeting are dancing around in your head. You can clearly picture them in your mind and want one so badly you can practically taste it. Instead of trying to block out the thought (which, just like the tap-dancing snake, will continue bopping around in your head), refocus your thoughts.

DO THIS:

Remember the details of your wedding day, the way you felt when you gave birth to your first child, or recall a favorite vacation memory. Engage all your senses when recalling these events to mind.

Refocusing and reframing your thoughts is similar to creative visualization. The more vivid the sensory experience, the more distracted you will become from thoughts of emotional eating.

STEP ONE:

Write down a list of at least 10 of your favorite memories, sensations, and experiences.

STEP TWO:

When a craving strikes, pull out your list and dive into the new thought completely. If the memory is of a favorite vacation, for example, feel the warm sun on your back, smell the salt air, and listen to the sounds of the seagulls calling as they swoop and dive amongst the waves.

Allow yourself to spend at least five full minutes on this activity.



Grounding Techniques

KNOW THIS:

Grounding techniques can be used to distract yourself from food cravings as well as bring you back to the present moment and away from negative thoughts.

EXAMPLE:

There are a few types of grounding techniques to choose from. They include grounding your body (biting into a lemon, or grabbing an ice cube), grounding your mind (repeating song lyrics, or reading the passage of a book backwards), and grounding to the earth (walking barefoot on the grass or gardening).

DO THIS:

You can use one or all of these techniques, depending on your emotional state and needs at the time.

OPTION ONE:

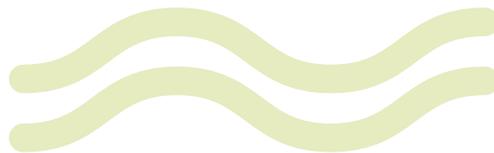
Grounding your body - When you ground your body, you are pulling yourself fully into the present moment, away from food cravings and negative thoughts. Biting into a lemon or squeezing an ice cube are two ways to gently “shock” yourself into present awareness. Try soothing your body by resting your elbows on a table. Rub your hands together quickly until you feel the warmth. Place your palms over your eyes for a soothing moment. Or, sit in a Child’s yoga pose—sitting with your legs tucked under you. Then, place your forehead on the ground or a pillow. Notice how touching the floor helps to ground your emotions back to a reasonable level.

OPTION TWO:

Grounding your mind - When you make a conscious effort to focus your mind on something else, you’ll decrease your stress levels and the likelihood that you will turn to food for comfort. Ground your mind by reading a passage from a book from the last word to the first. This will force your concentration and blot out all other thoughts. You can also flip through photos on your phone, or watch a cute or funny video on YouTube.

OPTION THREE:

Grounding to the earth - Grounding to the earth helps you feel more connected to nature, life, and all there is. For some, this can be a deeply spiritual experience. Ground to the earth by standing barefoot on grass, taking a walk along the beach, or tracing your hands over an old tree, enjoying its texture and shape.



Counting Your Senses

KNOW THIS:

Counting your senses is a great way to refocus your attention and bring your awareness back to the present moment. It can also be a fun and interesting way to take your mind off of food cravings.

EXAMPLE:

Counting your senses is a way of noticing the world around you by engaging each of your senses one at a time.

DO THIS:

TECHNIQUE ONE:

To yourself, name five things you can see in your immediate surroundings.

TECHNIQUE TWO:

Identify four colors you see.

TECHNIQUE THREE:

Name two sounds you hear.

TECHNIQUE FOUR:

Notice one scent you smell.

TECHNIQUE FIVE:

Tune into three sensations your body is feeling. For example, the temperature of the room, the feeling of the clothes on your back, and the sensation of the chair you are sitting in.



Soothing Your Senses

KNOW THIS:

Breathing may be your ultimate key to health, wellness, and weight loss. Although it may not seem like it would be effective (after all, you breathe all the time without thinking about it), many studies have shown that deep breathing is key to reducing stress, soothes the senses, and helps you keep a better handle on your emotions.

EXAMPLE:

Breathing techniques can include deep breathing, abdominal breathing, mantra meditation, and alternative nostril breathing.

DO THIS:

Right now, as you're reading this, take a large, deep breath and let it out slowly. Repeat. As you do this, you should feel your mind becoming clearer, your shoulders relaxing, and your anxiety ebbing away. Oftentimes, people realize they're feeling anxious when the anxiety begins to drift away on the exhale.

TECHNIQUE ONE - DEEP BREATHING:

Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down where you won't be interrupted. Close your eyes, allow your muscles to relax, and take a few slow, deep breaths. If your mind wanders to a thought or a craving, simply bring it back to your breathing.

TECHNIQUE TWO - ABDOMINAL BREATHING:

When you're feeling a high level of stress, you are most likely breathing with your chest instead of your abdomen. Breathing with your diaphragm (abdominal breathing) increases the amount of oxygen in your body, which interrupts the fight-or-flight response while simultaneously triggering the relaxation response.

To really feel the difference between chest breathing and abdominal breathing, lie on a bed, yoga mat, or other comfortable surface, and place your hands on your belly. Close your eyes and take a deep breath, feeling your belly rise beneath your hands. Slowly exhale and allow your muscles to relax and sink into the surface beneath you.

This technique is especially helpful for comfort eaters.



TECHNIQUE THREE - MANTRA MEDITATION:

A mantra is a word, sound, or phrase that helps protect your mind from chaotic thoughts and assists in focusing your attention inward. Start with five minutes and work your way up to 20.

Here are two easy mantra meditation exercises to try:

The “OM” Chant

Inhale deeply and, as you exhale, breathe out the word “OM” (pronounced “Aum”). It is said that chanting this simple mantra can deactivate the limbic system, which includes the hypothalamus, the amygdala, and the hippocampus. These forebrain structures are responsible for emotion, learning, memory, and motivation.

The “So Hum” Mantra

On the inhale, say the word “so”, and on the exhale, breathe out the word “hum”. This meditation is believed to be effective in helping you let go of anger, anxiety, hate, loneliness, and depression.

TECHNIQUE FOUR - ALTERNATE- NOSTRIL BREATHING:

People often experience alternate-nostril breathing as a “cleansing” breath, one that helps them clear away their urge to emotionally eat. When you feel confused or overwhelmed, try alternate-nostril breathing.

It will help you feel grounded, centered, and focused.

Follow these steps for alternate-nostril breathing:

- Sit upright in a chair with both feet on the ground.
- Bending your right elbow, place the tips of your right index and middle fingers in between your eyebrows.
- Then, place your right thumb on your right nostril. Close your right nostril as you inhale through the left.
- At the top of the inhalation, close the left nostril with the ring finger or pinkie, release the right thumb, and exhale through the right nostril. Then inhale through the right nostril.
- At the top of the inhalation, close the right nostril with your thumb, release your ring finger or pinkie, and exhale through the left. This is one round. Repeat.



Critical to Curious

KNOW THIS:

If you struggle with emotional eating, you're probably more critical of yourself than you realize.

EXAMPLE:

Thoughts like "I'm so stupid for eating that piece of cake" or "I'm so ugly like this" can sometimes run through your head so automatically, you're not even aware of how many times a day you're actually putting yourself down!

These thoughts can be damaging to your mental well-being and keep you from reaching your goals.

DO THIS:

STEP ONE - NAME THAT VOICE:

When that little voice in your head starts to put you down, give it a name. "Oh look, my Badgering Voice is back again." Or "Oh, my Miss Must-Be-Perfect voice is blathering on."

STEP TWO - GET CURIOUS:

When my clients voice a negative thought about themselves, I always ask them, "Where did that come from?" Oftentimes, the voice is a pattern repeating itself from the past. For example, you may have had an overly-critical parent who put you down. The next time you have a negative thought, behave as though you heard it coming from the next room. Ask yourself some questions.

"What triggered this thought?" "How does this thought make me feel?"

Distancing yourself from negative thinking can help you gain perspective and reduce your urge to eat out of emotional need.



Let Go of “Zebra Thinking”

KNOW THIS:

Black-and-white thinking, or zebra thinking, can cause anxiety, uncertainty, and frustration while intensifying your cravings for food.

EXAMPLE:

If you often find yourself using words like “perfect” “never” “ever” “always” “impossible” or “disaster”, you have a clear case of black-and-white thinking.

DO THIS:

STEP ONE:

As soon as absolute words start popping into your mind or out of your mouth, gently replace them with less extreme words such as “sometimes” “occasionally” and “good enough.” Over time, your mind will do this automatically.

STEP TWO:

Black-and-white thinking is often at its worst when you do something that has pulled you off the path to healthiness. Remember, you’re human. Making mistakes is normal and even expected.

If you give in and eat a chocolate bar from the vending machine, your first thought might be something like, “I just sabotaged my entire diet plan! I might as well give up.”

Instead, realize that this is just a small step backward and replace this thought with something like, “OK, so I gave into one craving. I’ve been on the right track all week. I will continue to try my best each day.”

ACTION

Action follows thought. That is the natural progression of things. However, if you are prone to emotional eating, the thought of the leftover pizza in the fridge may prompt you to eat several slices even if you’re not in the least bit hungry.

When cool thoughts and distractions aren’t enough to keep those negative cravings at bay, use these actions to become fully immersed. They will not only take your mind off unwanted thoughts, they will also engage your body.



Laughter

KNOW THIS:

Laughter is, indeed, the best medicine. When you laugh, your brain signals your body to relax while releasing neurotransmitters that make you feel pleasure.

EXAMPLE:

There are many ways to get a good laugh. For example, watch your favorite sitcom, look at funny videos on the Internet, read out loud from a joke book, do a Mad Libs exercise (remember those?), or try laughing yoga.

DO THIS:

OPTION ONE:

If you like to surf around online for your entertainment, there is one particular series of videos on YouTube.com you should check out.

It's called the "Try Not to Laugh Challenge", and the trick is to keep a straight face while increasingly funny photos and videos play out on the screen until you can't help but at least crack a smile.

Once that happens, you're likely to be doubled over, slapping your knee, and struggling to catch your breath as the situations in these videos get more and more ridiculous.

(Note: Some of the clips in these videos can get a bit bawdy, so avoid watching them at work or with your kids.)

OPTION TWO:

Try laughing yoga. This modern form of yoga, created by a family physician in Mumbai, India, involves laughing and other physical movements designed to create a cascade of pleasant reactions in your body.

To give it a try, sit somewhere comfortable and repeat these sounds in a "jolly old Saint Nick" sort of way: Ho ho. Ha ha ha. Repeat them several times for a few minutes. Pretending to laugh often stimulates real laughter, and, before you know it, you will be cracking up.

OPTION THREE:

Learn to find the humor in everyday challenges. What is it about the situation you're in right now that may cause you to laugh about it in five years? Is there anything funny or ironic about it now? Looking to the more humorous side of life can help ease your anxiety and keep you from taking yourself too seriously.

OPTION FOUR:

Get silly. Stand up. Imagine a hula hoop around your waist. Start the hoop in motion by swinging your hips and saying, "aeceeeee" out loud as it goes around. Laugh as you swing around. Or, move your hands on either side of your head as if you were flossing your brain (mental flossing!). Give a little giggle.

Journaling

KNOW THIS:

Journaling is a great way to keep track of your activities and goals for the day. It's also an excellent way to gain deeper clarity on the thoughts and feelings you're struggling with.

EXAMPLE:

If you're having an especially difficult day, whether you gave in to a craving, are really beating yourself up, or just don't feel all that confident, taking your thoughts to pen and paper (or to your computer) is a great way to distance yourself from the immediate emotion that rises from these thoughts, so you can gain some perspective.

DO THIS:

OPTION ONE:

Do some free-form writing. Get a blank sheet of paper or call up a new document on your computer, and type whatever it is you're thinking or feeling. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, or if the words even make any sense. This exercise is designed to help you get the bothersome feelings and thoughts out of you and onto paper so you can easily name them, even if you don't always understand them. Challenge yourself to write just one sentence a day to sum up your experience.

OPTION TWO:

Look carefully at your list of words and sentence fragments and pick one or two that jump out at you the most strongly like, "anxiety" or "fear." Then, write the word down the page. Begin each sentence with the beginning letter. For example, fear begins with F. Next to f you might write, "facing my mother is scary....." Continue with each letter of the word. This creative activity can be calming and illuminating.



Self-Massage

KNOW THIS:

Massage is wonderful natural medicine for the body and mind. In addition to making you feel relaxed and pampered, massage helps relieve sore muscles, enhances immunity by stimulating lymphatic flow, increases your joint flexibility, and alleviates depression.

Massage is one of the best gifts you can give yourself. Not only does it help relieve tension

and stress, it improves your circulation and helps detoxify your lymphatic system. It also helps treat digestive disorders, anxiety, depression, anger, and grief. You don't have to spend money on a professional massage therapist. You can give yourself the soothing touch you need to feel calm, energized, and healed.

DO THIS:

There are several types of massages you can give yourself right in the comfort of your own home.

These include, but are not limited to:

Tennis Ball Massage

A healing, acupressure massage is only a tennis ball and a sock away. Place two tennis balls into a sock and tie up the sock. Lie down on the floor or a yoga mat and press your upper back into the tennis balls. Move around until you feel the balls pressing into an especially tender area of your back. Lie on this spot for one to five minutes or until pain and pressure is relieved. Or, kick off your shoes and place the tennis ball under your foot. Roll your foot over the top of the ball for a soothing moment. You can also freeze a water bottle and use this for a soothing sensation instead of the tennis ball.

Foam Roller Massage

A hard foam roller is worth the small investment (usually under \$20) because the foam penetrates deeply into your muscles, loosening and relaxing them in a way that is not easily achieved by rubbing alone. You can use a foam roller just about anywhere on your body where you feel tension and strain. Gently rubbing your limbs on the foam roller and using your body weight to apply pressure will help work out even the most stubborn knots.

The Stretching Hand Massage

If you sit in front of a computer all day, you may have tight wrists and sore fingers. One of the best types of self-massage is a hand massage. Get a bit of lotion and use your thumb to massage first the palms of your hand and then each individual finger. Repeat for the other hand. Now is also a good time to gently stretch your fingers backward with one hand until you feel a release of tension in your wrist. Repeat for the other hand.

Reduce Neck Tension

Do a simple rag doll exercise. Tense up your neck and shoulder muscles and then release. Go limp as if you are a rag doll. Transitioning between tension and relaxation can help your muscles and anxiety fade.

The “Power Pose”

KNOW THIS:

If you want to have more control over your cravings and feel more confident about yourself, this will be one of the most powerful actions you can do.

It may not seem possible, but studies have shown your posture can have a profound influence on your feelings of power and self-worth.

DO THIS:

Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart, put your hands on your hips, push your shoulders back, and thrust your chest forward like Superwoman. Remaining in this pose for two minutes can help you exude more confidence because when you stand this way, your testosterone increases by 20 percent, while cortisol, the stress hormone, effortlessly fades away.

When a food craving hits, get into your “Power Pose” and marshal your confidence. You can do this. You can beat this. You can redirect your mind and focus on the positive.



The 5-5-5-5-5 Exercise

KNOW THIS:

When overwhelming emotions have you headed for the cupboard, it's time to move and act in a new way. Just remember, in order for these actions to work effectively, it is important that you place 100 percent of your attention on the action for the allotted period of time.

EXAMPLE:

Instead of munching on popcorn when you are anxious, consult this list and try out one of the activities for just five minutes.

DO THIS:

STEP ONE:

Now you're ready to do the exercise for real. Flip to a new sheet of paper and writing the following:

5 People

Who are five people you can count on to be there for you when times get stressful? (Examples: friend, brother, partner, etc.)

5 Places

Where are five places you can go to relax and unwind from stress? (Examples: the outdoor hammock, the tub, the park, etc.)

5 Things

What are five things you can say to yourself right now that will boost your confidence and help you fight off those unwanted food cravings? (Examples: "I can do this!", "This too shall pass.")

5 Activities

What are five activities you can use to distract yourself? (Examples: watch a movie, run an errand, play with your children, etc.)

5 Ways

What are five ways you can relax completely? (Examples: take a hot shower, put your feet up, meditate, etc.)

STEP TWO:

Hang this list where you know you will see it. On the refrigerator or cupboard are good places, as when you've reached the point where you're headed for either for a bout of mindless eating, you will need your list the most. Look it over and decide which technique would work best for how you're feeling right now.

Do this diversion for a least five minutes (longer if you can).



Mindful Stretching Exercises

KNOW THIS:

If you work in an office, there's a reason you get into that mid-afternoon slump. Not only is your brain tired from staring at your work for so long, but your circulation has slowed way down. When your muscles stay still for long periods of time, blood pools into the muscles and makes you feel tired and sluggish.

The good news is, mindful stretching exercises can give you a quick energy boost and reset your overworked brain while keeping you clear of the vending machine.

Here are the exercises I teach my clients:

TOWEL STRETCH

Sit in a chair with your spine straight and feet planted firmly on the floor. Grab a towel that has been folded lengthwise several times and, with your palms facing down, pull the ends of the towel so it is taut in front of you.

Your hands should be placed wide apart. Lift the towel slowly over your head, pulling the ends of the towel outward. Pause. Then move your arms behind you.

You might feel your hands shift along the towel. This is fine. You should feel a stretch in the front of your shoulders. If you feel any discomfort, try placing your hands farther apart on the towel. Then, slowly bring your arms back up over your head and to your front. Repeat this sequence five times.

LEGS UP THE WALL

This is one of my favorite poses because it's so relaxing and invigorating at the same time. Since it is a mild inversion pose, it helps reduce headaches, depression, fatigue, and insomnia. It also helps reduce lower back pain and stretches out the muscles in your back legs.

How to do this pose:

Step One: Place a firm pillow or bolster against the wall.

Step Two: Sit with your left side up against the wall, your lower back against the pillow.

Step Three: Turn slowly to your left, bringing your legs up the wall, scooting your lower back onto the pillow as you gently lower your mid and upper back to the floor.

Step Four: With your shoulders resting comfortably on the floor, scoot your bottom close to the wall and allow your arms to extend out from your sides, palms facing up.

Step Five: Your feet should be hip-width apart and your legs should be either completely straight or slightly bent.

Step Six: Relax in this position for five to 10 minutes, breathing mindfully.

Step Seven: To come out of the pose, bend your knees and slowly slide your legs down to the floor, turning your torso to the side as you do.

Step Eight: Using your hands, push yourself back up into a seated position.

DOOR FRAME STRETCH

Stand in the middle of a doorway and place your palms flat against the wall on either side of the door frame. Keeping your back straight, lean forward through the doorway while keeping your hands still. You should feel a good stretch across your chest. Move your hands higher or lower to stretch different areas of your chest.

Smiling

KNOW THIS:

When you're feeling happy and relaxed, you smile. But did you know that you can feel happier and more relaxed by breaking out into a grin? It's true. Research has shown that the simple act of smiling (whether you're in a good mood or not) can reduce stress, improve mood, lower blood pressure, and release endorphins ("feel-good" neurotransmitters).

One study revealed that smiling during a stressful event causes the heart rate to return to a normal pace in less time than with those who didn't smile (Kraft and Pressman 2012). In this study, participants were asked to hold chopsticks in their mouths. Even these manufactured smiles seemed to do the trick. Conversely, frowning activates the amygdala, the part of your brain that processes survival emotions like fear.

HERE'S WHAT TO DO:

Break out into a wide, ridiculous grin. One so maniacal, that if anyone were to see it, they'd think you lost your mind. Go one better and look in the mirror while you do it. You'll look so silly,

you won't be able to help smiling and laughing for real. You can combine this simple technique with laughter yoga to help center, de-stress, and focus on the positive in your life.

LETTING GO

"Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned." - Buddha

When someone irritates you, violates your trust, and/or mistreats you in some way, it can be difficult to let those feelings of hurt, anger, and resentment go. After all, letting go may feel like giving up. As though you're somehow saying you expect the behavior, condone it, and don't mind if it happens again.

That is not true.

Letting go has little to do with the other person and everything to do with you and your state of well-being. When you let go, you give yourself the freedom and confidence you need to learn how you want to be treated, and never settle for anything less.



The Catch and Release Method

KNOW THIS:

Some people fish because they want to pull in their catch for food or a trophy. Others prefer the catch and release method, because they want to enjoy the experience of fishing, but have no plans to use the creature for anything else.

EXAMPLE:

Let's say you're standing on a dock with a fishing pole when you get a bite. You reel it in only to find a fish so tiny, it fits in the palm of your hand. Smiling, you gently unhook the poor little creature and plop it back into the water. The next tug is a little stronger and you get excited, hoping this will be your catch of the day. Instead, you haul in a boot. Irritated, you hurl the boot back into the creek.

DO THIS:

Your goal is to do the same thing with unwanted thoughts and feelings as you did with the tiny fish and the boot. Realize they're there, catch them, and release them.

Here's a practice dialogue to follow:

Catch: "I have to have a piece of cake right now."

Release: "Oh, there goes another thought about food."

Catch: "I've been good for two whole days. I deserve some fast food."

Release: "Just because I have a craving for fast food doesn't mean I'm hungry."

Catch: "You're so fat, I'm surprised you don't break chairs when you sit down."

Release: "Oh, that was a very critical thought."

Catch: "Why am I so hard on myself?"

Release: "A thought is just a thought. I don't have to buy it."



Soothing Affirmations and Positive Self-Talk

KNOW THIS:

By now you know that stressful thoughts worsen your cravings and make you feel bad about yourself. The good news is, you can use the power of your mind to your advantage. Soothing affirmations and positive self-talk can work wonders on improving your confidence and self-esteem while easing anxious or depressed feelings.

EXAMPLE:

Some examples of soothing affirmations are:

- “I see the humor in everyday situations.”
- “I have a loving heart.”
- “I am a great mother.”
- “I have a spouse who cares about me and encourages me.”
- “I have supportive friends.”
- “I am comfortable with who I am.”
- “I find something positive in each new day.”

DO THIS:

STEP ONE:

Different affirmations can be used for different situations. If, for example, you were feeling down on yourself, the above-mentioned affirmations would be great for you. Staying within the same framework, write five to seven more positive affirmations of your own. If you're having trouble coming up with some, just do an Internet search on “positive affirmations”, and you'll have pure gold at your fingertips.

STEP TWO:

If you feel a food craving coming on as the result of strong emotion, try using these helpful affirmations, which come from my book, *50 Ways to Soothe Yourself Without Food*:

- “I’m on the road to feeling calmer.”
- “Eating won’t resolve this problem.”
- “I’m good at tackling a challenge head-on.”
- “I can do this. It just takes time.”
- “I can wait. My emotional hunger will pass with a little patience.”

- “I can soothe myself. I don’t need food to do that.”
- “I am going to feel less stressed any minute. I can hang in there.”
- “I enjoy being healthy.”

OPTION TWO: INSPIRATION BOX

The Inspiration Box is another way of self-soothing without food that many of my clients have had great success with.

Cut out small squares of paper and write down a distraction, an action, or another technique you know will help distract you when those cravings hit. You should have a minimum of 10 options, but most prefer 20 or more as this keeps things exciting and boosts incentive.

Fold each square of paper and place it in an empty tissue box. When you feel a craving coming on, reach into the box and pull out one of those squares. Do that activity for at least five minutes. If the craving is still there, grab another paper from the box, and keep going until the urge to emotionally eat has completely slipped away.

Worry Mindfully

KNOW THIS:

Worry doesn't always have to be a bad thing. It's quite normal to worry about things from time to time. It's stewing on worries and letting them control what you say, do, and eat that presents a problem.

This is why scheduling time for mindful worrying is often a helpful strategy.

EXAMPLE:

When your mind conjures up something to fret about, firmly say to yourself, "Not now. I'll worry about this later." When your designated worry time comes up, give yourself permission to worry for 20 minutes.

While you're worrying, really think about the problem and come up with solutions. For example, the more bills you pay, unfinished projects you complete, and neglected chores you do, the more accomplished you'll feel.

DO THIS:

STEP ONE:

Set a designated "worry time" in which you will practice mindful, constructive worrying that helps you find solutions to problems that once pulled you to the fridge like a magnet.

If you decide that 7 p.m. to 7:20 p.m. is to be your nightly worry time, do all your worrying then, and then stop when your time is up.

STEP TWO:

Before you start your daily mindful worrying time, consider writing down your most frequent concerns and worries. This way, if your mind is just a jumble of thoughts and anxiety, when you sit down to worry, you can glance at your list and pick something you're most concerned about and tackle it right then and there.



Rituals

KNOW THIS:

Rituals are a certain set of behaviors performed in a particular order and linked to a certain set of circumstances. For example, you may perform the same rituals every morning when you wake up or every night before you go to bed without even realizing it.

You follow these rituals because they are familiar and comforting. They are a constant in your life and help you cope with the uncertainty and instability that comes with daily living.

DO THIS:

You can also use certain rituals to make mealtime a more pleasurable, comforting experience. An interesting study revealed that enacting a ritual around eating can heighten your enjoyment of the food, resulting in improved portion control, a slower eating pace, and even a willingness to pay more for the food you're eating (Vohs et al. 2013).

You may believe this study only examined fine-dining experiences or eating foods that were highly desirable. Not the case. In fact, one study showed that rituals helped people increase their anticipation of eating baby carrots (Vohs et al. 2013)!

If you don't already have established mealtime routines, come up with a few. Think about what you could do at breakfast, lunch, and dinner to make the experience more fulfilling and less emotionally charged.

OPTION ONE:

Follow your comforting routines when preparing to eat each meal. For example, take the time to make a soothing cup of tea before sitting down to breakfast. Express your creativity by bringing a lunch that delights your eyes as well as your taste buds. Cut out some mini sandwiches with a cookie cutter, or make a salad with as many colors as you can find. At dinnertime, put on some soft instrumental music and dim the lights.

OPTION TWO:

Create a shoe ritual. As you slip off your heels or boots from work, say, "I leave my stress here at the door." This mantra will help you to let go of the day's stress instead of trying to shed your stress munching your way through the kitchen with a pre-dinner, post-work snack.



Ease and Please Your Senses

KNOW THIS:

If food is the first thing that comes to mind when you're faced with a stressful situation, what you're really craving is comfort. That comfort can come in many different ways that don't involve a trip to

the kitchen. When you learn to ease and please your senses in other ways, your food cravings will become weaker and weaker until they fade away altogether.

DO THIS:

There are so many wonderful ways to please your senses and soothe yourself when you're feeling out of sorts.

Here are some ways to ease into comfort without taking a single bite of food:

When you feel uncomfortable...

- Ease your senses by loosening your clothing and taking off your shoes.
- Please your senses by putting on something soothing to your skin, such as a silk shirt, fleece jacket, or soft cashmere sweater.

When you're feeling hot, flushed, or anxious...

- Ease your senses by finding a cooler room, pulling the shades down to darken the room, or turning on a fan.
- Please your senses by drinking some cool lemon-or mint-flavored water.

When you're feeling worried...

- Ease your senses by mentally letting go of your worries. Inhale and say to yourself, "When I let go of what I am, I might become what I might be."
- Please your senses by holding an object (a pebble, small ball, or anything else that symbolizes your anger) in your hand and closing your palm around it. With your hand still closed, turn your hand over, and then open it.
- This is much like emotion: We wrap ourselves around it, holding it tight,

and becoming attached to it. But you can let it go. When the object falls to the floor, you have handed it over for the world to take care of. You can use this imagery without actually having an item in your hand: simply visualize letting go of whatever it is you are feeling, then watch it drop.

When you are feeling angry...

- Ease your senses with balloons. Write down your grievances on little pieces of paper. Stick the paper into several balloons and blow them up. Place all the balloons on the ground.
- Please your senses by stomping on the balloons. When you've smashed them to tiny, satisfying little bits, pick up the pieces of balloon and paper and throw them in the trash. Let that be a symbol of throwing your anger away.

Soothing With Your Senses

KNOW THIS:

Eating food changes your sensations immediately. Reaching for a snack jots your senses. Here are some other ways to wake up your senses.

DO THIS:

Sight: Look around you and find three objects that put you in a calmer frame of mind. Alternatively, you can dim the lights, stare at a candle, gaze at a fish tank, or watch the clouds.

Sound: Listen carefully to the sounds around you. Do you hear birds chirping, crickets singing, or children laughing outside? Tune into these pleasing sounds, and really enjoy the moment. Alternatively, you can listen to some soothing instrumental music or enjoy some time in complete silence.

Touch: The sensation of touch can be the most comforting and soothing of all. Place a pleasing fabric against your skin like silk, satin, suede, or fleece. You can also try holding a mug of warm coffee or gently stroking your pet.

Taste: When cravings hit hard, it's a good time to fully engage your sense of taste by eating a peppermint, chewing cinnamon gum, brushing your teeth, or drinking carbonated water. When you keep your mouth busy and your tastebuds satisfied, you will feel far less deprived and tempted to run into the kitchen and devour leftover lasagna or chocolate.

Smell: There are so many wonderful scents out there to experience besides the ones that can come from food. Take a moment to think about your favorite smell. Is it a specific type of flower, a cinnamon stick, an essential oil, or a particular brand of incense you enjoy most? Surrounding yourself with pleasant smells can help diminish those unwanted cravings.



The “Pouring” Pose

KNOW THIS:

Standing in line at the grocery store often brings about two strong feelings associated with emotional eating: anxiety and boredom. This might be when the urge to munch is stronger than ever. After all, you’re surrounded by food, and those candy bars are starting to look pretty good right about now.

There is a Tai Chi movement you can use to achieve mindfulness while intentionally calming your body and mind. This movement is called the “pouring” pose.

Here’s how to do it:

- Place both feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
- Very slowly, shift all your weight to your right leg. As you do this, imagine each leg is like a glass of water. You’re pouring

everything from one glass to the other very slowly, filling up one side and leaving the other empty. You are fully in charge of this process.

- Once all your weight has been shifted to one side, allow that side to be completely “full” and the other side to be completely empty.
- Hold this pose for five seconds.
- Repeat the process on the left side, gently pouring until “full.”

You can practice this technique anywhere without anyone noticing you’re doing it. People unconsciously shift their weight all the time. When you do this exercise, you are just doing it mindfully.

MINDFULNESS

Too many of us go about our daily lives on autopilot, following the same routine but never really experiencing it.

For example, eating breakfast, driving the kids to school, driving to work, working, driving home, cooking dinner, doing chores, putting the kids to bed, going to bed. It’s as though the whole day rushes together in one long moment with no stops in between.

Mindfulness is about being fully present and aware in the moment. It’s about being *here* now, engaged with all five senses, and really taking everything in.



Compassion Meditation

KNOW THIS:

Compassion meditation, also known as the loving-kindness meditation, has been practiced for thousands of years. It's a great tool to use to help you learn how to be more compassionate with yourself and others.

EXAMPLE:

You will begin by directing kind words and thoughts toward yourself. As you say these words,

allow yourself to really feel the emotions associated with them. You deserve this kind of care.

You will follow by directing compassionate thoughts toward others.

Afterward, you will direct this compassion toward the whole world. Although it may feel strange at first to send compassion to someone you don't know, it will get easier with practice and help you feel more connected and at peace with the world.

DO THIS:

Here's how to practice compassion meditation:

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place where you will not be interrupted.
2. Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
3. Allow your muscles to relax and your mind to quiet down.
4. Repeat the following statements in your mind or out loud:
 - "May I be at peace with myself."
 - "May I know joy with myself and eating."
 - "May I be relaxed and well."
 - "May I feel acceptance and love for myself and my body."
 - "May I find peace and calmness within myself, instead of seeking it outside of myself."

(Feel free to substitute other phrases that feel important to you.)

5. First, direct the statements toward yourself.
6. The next time you say them, direct your statement to a close friend. For example, "May my friend, Courtney, be at peace with herself."
7. Then direct the statements to someone you consider an acquaintance.
8. Then send them to a difficult person.
9. Finally, send your phrases to the entire universe.



Mindful Urge Surfing

KNOW THIS:

Mindful Urge surfing is a classic mindfulness strategy. What you learn from it is that the strength and nature of food cravings (and other cravings) changes from minute-to-minute. Sometimes the cravings are intense like a crashing wave and other times gently washing out. In this technique, you pay attention to what the craving feelings like, each second, as it changes and transforms. While you observe, you hold back on judgment of whatever you are experiencing (this is great, this is awful, I can't stand this, this will never end etc.).

The result is that you learn to ride over waves of cravings and take away their power but *observing* rather than *acting* on them.

EXAMPLE:

You are sitting at your desk craving a candy bar. When you are honest with yourself, you know that you are just feeling bored. Internally, you wrestle with yourself, trying to talk yourself out of this craving.

DO THIS:

TO GET STARTED WITH URGE SURFING TRY THESE THREE STEPS:

1. When you notice a craving, sit down in a comfortable chair or in a quiet location. Next, place your feet flat on the floor. Take a few deep breaths to relax yourself. Inhale and exhale. Turn your attention inward toward your body. Try to feel where in your body you experience the sensation of the cravings and describe to yourself what these cravings feel like in different parts of your body (for example *"I feel a pit in the bottom of my stomach, I feel tension in my shoulders"*).
2. Chose one spot in your body that seems to be harboring the cravings. Deeply focus your attention on these sensations as they pass by. To keep your mind from wandering, describe the sensations as they happen (for example *"my stomach feels empty like a pit, now it's feeling slightly better, from a 10 to a 9."*
3. Next move to another affected part of the body. Repeat the focused attention there. After a while, you will notice that the food craving will have passed by or lessened.



Staying in the Present Moment

KNOW THIS:

When you remain in the present moment, it's the only thing that matters. There are no regrets about the past or worries about the future, even if that future is only five minutes away. Staying in the present moment is one of the best tools you can use to conquer negative thinking, food cravings, and anxiety.

EXAMPLE:

You can practice learning how to stay in the present moment by 'grounding' yourself to one

room. This means you can think about anything that is *in* the room, but nothing *outside* of it. (It would be best if you used another room besides the kitchen to do this.)

Imagine the room is as sturdy and soundproof as a safe. You can get out whenever you want to, but you choose to use the image of being encased in metal where new thoughts cannot enter. If this image doesn't work for you, imagine yourself in a clear bubble. It's the same concept. New thoughts cannot enter this space.

DO THIS:

STEP ONE:

A simple exercise you can do whenever you feel your mind drifting away from the present moment is to take a deep breath and say to yourself, "Here. Now." If you're somewhere where you can do this, close your eyes, and spend at least five minutes repeating the same mantra over and over. Breathe in: "Here." Breathe out: "Now."

STEP TWO:

Have you ever played *I Spy* as a child? The rules are simple. You say, "I spy, with my little eye, something blue." Your partner then looks around the room and tries to guess which blue object you're referring to.

You can keep yourself in the present moment by playing your own modified version of the game alone.

Use all of your senses. Notice what you see, hear, touch, and smell in the room. Take note of the temperature and humidity level. You can even turn your focus inward and notice any bodily sensations you're experiencing. This will help ground you to the present moment, so you can truly feel what it's like to be mindful.



Meditation

KNOW THIS:

Meditation is a way of calming the thoughts, centering the heart, and practicing mindfulness. There are multiple ways to meditate, and no one type is better than the next.

Try several different types of meditation before making a commitment. This way, you'll see which practice is most effective for you.

COMMON TYPES OF MEDITATION:

Concentration - This involves looking at a specific object and focusing all of your attention on it and it alone. This object could be a candle, a coin, a shiny ring, or anything else that is pleasing to your eye.

- How to do it: Get into a comfortable seated position and take a few deep breaths. Allow your eyes to settle onto the object, gazing at it in a relaxed way. Notice its shape, color, and texture. If you find your thoughts drifting, simply return your attention back to the object. (Take care with a live candle flame, especially if you believe you will fall asleep during your meditation.)

Mantra - Mantra meditation involves chanting a word or phrase that channels your focus and energy in one direction. A mantra is designed to keep you in a state of meditation while helping to block out negative thoughts and feelings. Mantras can also help you connect to your practice on a deeper, more spiritual level.

- How to do it: Get yourself into a comfortable position. Close your eyes, and take a couple of deep, cleansing breaths. Aloud or in your head, begin chanting your mantra. A common mantra is "OM" (pronounced "Aum") which, in the Hindi language, is described as the vibration of all living things. You may also use a string of words together such as, "love, peace, light" or "health, happiness, success".

Mindfulness - Mindfulness meditation helps you get more deeply in touch with the emotions that drive you to overeat. Instead of focusing away from your thoughts, your goal is to concentrate on them fully.

- How to do it: Get into a comfortable, quiet place and take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes and wait for thoughts and feelings to arise. Instead of trying to focus your attention elsewhere, observe these thoughts and feelings in detail. If a craving thought arises such as, "There's chocolate cake in the fridge. I really need to eat it," observe the thought without judgment and counter it with a gentle question. "Why do I feel I have to eat the chocolate cake just because it's there?" Remind yourself, that a "thought is just a thought, not a fact. I don't have to act on it because I think it." The more in touch you are with how your thoughts affect your emotions and your emotions affect your actions, the more in control you'll be.

Mentally SIT

KNOW THIS:

Have you ever been around a puppy? They're adorable little bundles of energy with almost zero attention span. One moment, they're sitting in your lap, the next they're chewing vigorously on

a toy, and the next they're darting into the street after a car. This is why you have to keep a constant and eye on them!

DO THIS:

Your brain, when it is being bombarded by obsessive thoughts, is very much like that puppy. In order to train it, you have to gently but consistently correct its behavior. This is where the SIT method comes in.

Step One - Stop: Stop. Ask your mind to sit still for a moment and not run from place to place. Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?" Wait for images, thoughts, and feelings to arise. Observe them without judgment. Next, notice how your body feels. Are you emotionally or physically hungry?

Step Two - Inspect: Like a casual observer watching a parade go by, see your thoughts as nothing more than colorful floats disappearing around a bend. You might say to yourself something like, "Oh, look, there's that thought again telling me that I can't stand it, and I must eat!"

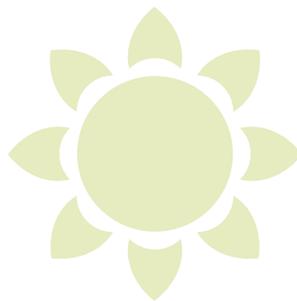
Step Three - Take a breath: Take a deep breath and re-center yourself with a refreshing burst of energy to the brain. Say to yourself or out loud, "I am here in this moment."

SQUEEGEE BREATH

Have you ever used a squeegee on your car or shower door? Or maybe you've seen a professional window washer use one? All it takes is one sweeping motion to clean all the grime off the surface and show the beautiful, clear pane of glass beneath. When you're feeling overwhelmed or tempted to do some comfort eating, take a "squeegee breath."

Step One - Take a deep breath, and focus on the top of your head.

Step Two - As you exhale, imagine the stress, worry, and negative thoughts leaving on your breath. Visualize a squeegee clearing away all that excess 'debris' and pulling it down to your toes until it sinks into the ground, where it is rendered harmless. As you breathe in, imagine clean water seeping over your skin refreshing and rejuvenating. Repeat ten times.



Shifting into the Moment

KNOW THIS:

This technique helps you use a few simple movements and exercises to make a stronger connection to the moment.

DO THIS:

When you find yourself struggling to stay calm and connected to the present moment, try this:

STEP ONE - SHIFT YOUR FOCUS:

Shift your attention to the present moment and connect with your senses. Pay attention to the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that surround you. You can do this by naming objects of a certain color or focusing on one particular sound.

STEP TWO - TOUCH TO CONNECT:

- First, touch your thumb to your index finger. As you do, say, "I am present."
- Then, touch your thumb to your middle finger. As you do, say, "I am okay just as I am."
- Now, touch your thumb to your ring finger. As you do, say, "I am calm."
- Finally, touch your thumb to your little finger. As you do, say, "I am in charge of only this moment, not the next or the last."

As you complete this progression, notice your awareness shifting into the moment.



Healthy Eating Mantras

KNOW THIS:

Mantras don't have to be used exclusively for meditation. You can also use them to turn negative

thinking into positive thinking and cravings into learning experiences.

DO THIS:

Here are the 18 mantras to use when they feel an urge to dig into some comfort food. Choose one below or create your own. Repeat to yourself several times a day.

1. "Eat to nourish and energize."
2. "What am I really hungry for?"
3. "The wise man should consider that health is the greatest of human blessings. Let food be your medicine." - Hippocrates
4. "I'm in charge of fueling my body mindfully."
5. "Food is fuel."
6. "I'm strengthening my 'resistance' muscle. It's getting stronger!"
7. "Self-care."
8. "Eat. Real. Food."
9. "The greatest wealth is health." - Virgil
10. "The body is like a piano, and happiness is like music. It is needful to have the instrument in good order." - Henry Ward Beecher
11. "In this food I see the entire universe supporting my existence."
12. "I practice gratitude with each bite. Gratitude for the farmers who grew the food, for hands that picked it, for drivers who brought it, for clerks who stocked it, for the earth and sun and rain that made it grow."
13. "What you think you become." - Buddha
14. "Be the change you wish to see in the world." - Gandhi
15. "Every day in every way I'm getting better and better." - Laura Silva
16. "I change my thoughts, I change my world." - Norman Vincent Peale
17. "I am flexible and flowing."
18. "My body knows what to do with this food. Trust it."



Calm, Cool & Comfort Pledge

Stopping the pattern of comfort eating takes commitment and intention. Hang this pledge in a location that you can see it often as a reminder to replace comfort eating with healthier, more effective activities.

- “I pledge to listen mindfully to my body.”
- “I pledge to tune into my thoughts and listen to them.”
- “I pledge to acknowledge how I feel and be honest with myself.”
- “I pledge to stay present and not turn off or escape my emotions with food, substances, etc.”
- “I pledge to give myself permission to relax.”
- “I pledge that I don’t have to be perfect.”
- “I pledge to take things one step at a time.”
- “I pledge to have patience with and forgive myself.”
- “I pledge to reach out for help when I need it.”

Name _____ Date _____

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Create Your Own Bingo Board

C (Cool Thoughts)	A (Action)	L (Letting Go)	M (Mindfulness)

Name _____ Date _____

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