

## **Learn when you are hungry and what your emotional triggers are.**

Reconnecting with your hunger signals requires patience, consistency, and a shift toward being more mindful when you eat.

### **1. Recognise Physical vs. Emotional Hunger**

Physical hunger builds gradually and is felt in the body, while emotional hunger often hits suddenly, is linked to specific cravings, and is driven by boredom or stress.

- Physical Signs: Stomach growling, low energy, irritability ("hanger"), dizziness, lightheadedness, or difficulty concentrating.
- Mental Checklist: Ask, "Is my stomach growling? Would I be satisfied with a plain apple right now?" If yes, it is likely physical hunger.

### **2. Utilise the Hunger-Fullness Scale**

Using a 1–10 scale can help you quantify your feelings to know when to start and stop eating:

- 1–2 (Starving): Intense, headache, irritable, "hangry." You have waited too long.
- 3–4 (Comfortably Hungry): Time to eat. You have energy but feel an empty sensation.
- 5–6 (Neutral/Satisfied): Calm, not thinking about food.
- 7–8 (Full): Comfortable, satisfied, pleasant fullness.
- 9–10 (Stuffed): Uncomfortably full, sluggish.
- *Goal: Aim to start eating at a 3–4 and stop at a 6–7.*

### **3. Practice Mindful Eating**

- Remove Distractions: Eat without phones, screens, or working at your desk, allowing you to focus on internal signals.
- Don't eat on the run.
- Sit to eat your meals.
- Slow Down: It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to receive the fullness signal from your gut.
- Pause Mid-Meal: Stop halfway through a meal to assess your hunger level.
- Use Your Senses: Take time to smell, taste, and feel the texture of food.

#### 4. Reconnect Through Routine

If you have ignored your hunger cues for a long time, you may need to "mechanically" eat at regular intervals for a few weeks to bring them back online.

- Eat Every 3–5 Hours: Set a loose schedule to keep your energy stable, which prevents "primal hunger" or overeating.
- Don't Skip Breakfast: Starting your day with food helps establish a rhythm.
- Keep Snacks Available: Having nutritious snacks available prevents you from falling into the "starving" 1-2 range.

#### 5. Shift Your Mindset

- Let Go of Food Rules: Rigid diets and "forbidden foods" (e.g., "no carbs," "don't eat after 7 PM") break the connection with your body's signals.
- Be Patient: If you are used to dieting, your body may need time to trust that it will be regularly nourished again.
- Use Self-Compassion: If you overeat, treat it as information to learn from rather than a reason for guilt.

I overeat when I -

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I tend to eat more than I would like when I -

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What do I feel is stopping me from listening to my hunger cues?

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