

Types of Hunger

This is a very simple technique to help you become more aware of why you are eating. It suggests that there are different types of hunger. Let's use three categories of hunger:



Stomach Hunger:

This is the physical need for food. It's been five or six hours since you've eaten. Your stomach is growling. Stomach hunger also refers to times when you might eat for a medical reason, for example to prevent a low blood sugar if you're on insulin. You are eating for the well-being of your body.



Mouth Hunger:

Have you ever stood in front of the fridge or cupboard looking for something to eat with a certain taste, texture, or smell? "Where are those salty, crunchy chips? No, that's not it, I want creamy . . . where's the ice cream?" You crave the pleasure of food. This describes mouth hunger.



Heart Hunger:

This type of hunger refers to when you are eating in response to your emotions or how you're feeling mentally, not physically. Heart hunger can also refer to a learned behaviour around food or eating.

Remember, at this stage you are collecting information about your own personal eating triggers. You don't want to change your eating behaviour yet.

Here's what you do . . .

1. For one full day, continue eating as you usually would with one difference.
2. Each time that you are about to eat something, ask yourself the question, "Is this stomach, mouth or heart hunger?"
3. Just keep a mental note of the answer or write down the types of hunger that you experience using the worksheet on the next page. Make this quick by using "S" for Stomach hunger, "M" for Mouth hunger and "H" for Heart hunger. It can be especially helpful to note the time of day or night that you're eating.
4. Write what you ate at the time – you don't have to include portions or details.
5. See if you can notice any patterns. Do you experience certain types of hunger at a particular time of day? Day of the week? Week of the month? In particular locations? When you're with specific people or doing certain activities? What type of hunger do you have the most often?