

How Healthy is Your Relationship with Food?

Between identifying when to eat, how to eat, and what to eat, we sometimes lose sight of the why's of eating and more importantly, the joys of eating. For individuals who have yo-yo dieted most of their lives, eating and food have taken on a life of their own, have somehow become a separate entity with immense power and control. Food no longer satiates them and instead has become a monster, something to fear. Nutrition is a fine balancing act, especially when focused on weight control. A sound nutrition plan; however, capitalizes on incorporating healthy, clean foods with foods that will satisfy the palate, the emotions, and the body for sustained energy, a clear head, and the ability to live your best life without disease. Unfortunately, when we take a very narrow-minded focus on food for the achievement of one goal (fat loss for example), we sometimes forget the importance of its other virtues. Take this quiz, borrowed from the National Health and Wellness Club, to help determine whether you are viewing food in the most positive light.

Do You Have a Healthy Relationship with Food?

1. Can you eat when you are hungry and quit when you are satisfied? **Yes no**
2. Do you stop eating because you think you should (as opposed to because your body is satisfied)? **Yes no**
3. Do you make food choices based on foods you enjoy? **Yes no**
4. Do you become physically uncomfortable (weak, tired, dizzy, headache) when you under-eat or diet? **Yes no**
5. Do you feel that your food selections are a combination of "healthy foods" and "pleasurable foods"? **Yes no**
6. Do you have to eat in a certain pattern - always three meals a day or always at a certain time of the day? **Yes no**
7. Do you trust that if you eat when you are hungry and stop when you are satisfied, you will not get fat? **Yes no**
8. Do you feel guilty when you eat to the point that you are stuffed and uncomfortable? **Yes no**
9. Can you leave some cookies on the plate because you know you can have some again tomorrow? **Yes no**
10. Do you watch what other people eat and use that to determine what and how much you will eat? **Yes no**
11. Can you balance the time you give to thoughts about food, weight and dieting with other important aspects of your life, such as relationships, work and self-development? **Yes no**
12. Do you usually pick foods based on their calorie content? **Yes no**

Scoring:

Add up all the "no" responses to the odd-numbered questions. Give one point for each "no" and put that number here _____

Add up all the "Yes" responses to the even-numbered questions. Give one point for each "Yes" and put that

number here _____

TOTAL _____

Interpretation

This survey is designed to help you reflect on your relationship with food. "Normal" eating is flexible. It varies in response to emotions, daily activities, hunger and proximity to food.

Scores between 0 and 3. These scores generally indicate a healthy attitude toward food and eating.

Scores between 4 and 8. These scores suggest that cultural pressures about appearance and ideas about how much and what kinds of foods to eat may be negatively affecting self-acceptance and overall happiness. Exploring these issues may be helpful.

Scores between 9 and 12. These scores suggest serious issues with food, ranging from food obsession to an eating disorder. These issues could be interfering with daily life and may negatively affect overall health. Professional assistance is recommended to deal with thoughts, feelings and behaviors related to food and body image. Medical evaluation and intervention may also be needed to address health concerns.

*Note: The "Healthy Relationship with Food" inventory can only give results based on the limited number of questions asked in the inventory. It cannot account for the truthfulness of the answers, only for the self-reporting of each participant. The interpretations given are for informational and educational purposes only, and do not constitute or substitute for any psychological or medical evaluations performed by a qualified professional, nor for any psychological or medical treatment. If psychological or medical evaluation and treatment are indicated, immediately consult a qualified professional. (*The Renfrew Center, © 2002, www.renfrewcenter.com.*)

Your relationship with food can affect every aspect of your life. Obsessing about food, binge eating, refusing to eat, and feeling as if food has become the primary focus in your life are valuable clues for you to pay attention to. The first step in seeking help is recognizing that there may be a problem. On the Run Fitness trainers can help to direct you toward appropriate professionals.

Kori Propst is a State of Colorado Licensed Professional Counselor and has worked with individuals who have food and eating related disorders.