



POST-OP VIDEO FOUR HOMEWORK

Preventing Weight Regain and Addressing Body Image

In Post –Op Video Four, we focused on living without the obsession of food and weight-related issues clouding your mind. The other major topic from this video was body image. The following exercises will help you as you work toward living free from the obsession of food-related thoughts and toward a more positive body image.

When you experience thoughts about food and food-related issues, do what you do with any thought – CHOOSE what you are going to do with it!

- First – recognize that you are having a food related thought.
- Then decide if you want to continue with that train of thought (realizing that if you do, the train probably crashes at regain station).
- OR you can consciously CHOOSE to remind yourself that you want to think about something unrelated to food and CHOOSE an entirely different topic to dwell on.

Homework:

1. Identify and list four topics you will think about when you recognize that you are dwelling on food or food-related topics. Be specific.

For example, “I’ll think about my kids,” probably won’t help you. However, “I’ll come up with five ways to help my children learn to be more positive about themselves.”

2. List three things you may want to avoid thinking about in your life. (Thinking about food may be a way to prevent you from thinking about these things.) After you have identified topics you are uncomfortable thinking about, write three sentences for each that start with, “I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____.” For each of these sentences, write three sentences that begin with, “A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____.”

For example,

- 1) “One thing I avoid thinking about in my life is _____.”
 - a. “I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____.”
 - b. “I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____.”
 - c. “I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____.”
 - i. “A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____.”
 - ii. “A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____.”

iii. "A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____."

2) "Another thing I avoid thinking about in my life is _____."

a. "I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____."

b. "I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____."

c. "I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____."

i. "A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____."

ii. "A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____."

iii. "A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____."

3) "Another thing I avoid thinking about in my life is _____."

a. "I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____."

b. "I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____."

c. "I am uncomfortable thinking about _____ because _____."

i. "A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____."

ii. "A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____."

iii. "A benefit of thinking about, writing about, and/or talking about this would be _____."

Another possible reason that food related thoughts continue to haunt you after you've lost your excess weight is because these types of thoughts have become bad habits. And how do you extinguish a bad habit? With effort and replacement.

3. When you notice yourself thinking about food, tell yourself "I no longer need to think about food. Instead, I'll: (list four specific things you can physically do to interrupt your food-focused thoughts)":

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

Remember to utilize these additional tips for avoiding food-focused thoughts:

- When you eat, set a timer on your watch or phone for three hours (or four or whenever your next scheduled meal or healthy snack is)
 - o If you find yourself engaging in thoughts about food... remind yourself it's not time to think about food and get on your way until the timer goes off; when it does – then eat and again, reset your timer.
- Make plans for what food you are going to eat at meal and snack time.

- When food-related stuff enters your mind, say to yourself “I choose to be free of thoughts about... diets, recipes, or whatever.” THEN say, “Instead I will... _____!” (Then DO that thing!)
- Keep an index card in your wallet or a note on your computer desktop with a short list of things you can do rather than engage in excessive thoughts of food. Turn to this list if your mind goes blank when you’re trying to get away from your food-focused brain!
- Make a Tip Jar... A Tip Jar comes in handy for giving you ideas of other things to think about and for when you have food cravings. You can have your kids or grandkids help you with your tip jar. What you want to do is make lots and lots and lots of small pieces of paper on which you write a simple, short activity. The activity can be nonsensical or it can be meaningful. For example, it may say, “Get the phone book and count the number of people whose last name is Smith,” or it may be, “Write a note to a friend you haven’t seen in six months.” You and your family can work together to make items for your tip jar. The slips of paper all go into the jar and when you are having a craving and need something to do to keep yourself preoccupied for a few minutes until the craving passes, you pick a piece of paper from the tip jar and do whatever activity is on the paper. This gives you a few minutes to distract yourself by doing the activity. If you’re mentally preoccupied with thoughts of recipes or how much you weighed that morning, again – pick something from the tip jar and do it with the purpose of distracting yourself.
- Set some rules. If you set a few rules for yourself, it prevents you from having a debate in your head. List three rules that you can follow in your recovery from obesity:
 - o _____
 - o _____
 - o _____

The purpose of doing these things is to avoid weight regain! You are training your brain to stay away from thoughts about food. You are creating a new habit of thinking about other things and doing other things.

Sometimes a person needs outside help in this process. Write down the names and contact information for four people/groups you can turn to when you need help in the process of your recovery from obesity:

- o _____
- o _____
- o _____

Body Image

The National Eating Disorders Association says that people with a negative body image have a distorted perception of their shape, are convinced that only other people are attractive, feel ashamed, feel self-conscious, are anxious about their body, and feel uncomfortable in their body. The group further states that people with negative body image have a greater likelihood of developing an eating disorder and are more likely to suffer from feelings of depression, isolation, low self-esteem, and to be obsessed with weight loss.

On the other hand, the organization describes persons with a positive body image as having a true perception of their shape, appreciating their body’s natural shape and understanding that a person’s

physical appearance says very little about their character and value as a person; they refuse to spend an unreasonable amount of time worrying about food, weight, and calories; and they feel comfortable and confident in their body.

Dr. Thomas Cash, who wrote *The Body Image Workbook*, noted some steps to improve body image. Ways to improve your body image, says Dr. Cash, are to:

- 1) Discover your body image strengths and weaknesses.** Write down three things you like about your body and three things you would like to change. For those things you'd like to change, set specific goals for change, being realistic about the outcomes.

Things I like about my body:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Things I'd like to change about my body:

- a. _____
 - A goal I have for how to improve and/or accept this is: _____
- b. _____
 - A goal I have for how to improve and/or accept this is: _____
- c. _____
 - A goal I have for how to improve and/or accept this is: _____

- 2) Make a list of the four historical causes of your negative body image.** For example, did other women in your life teach by their example, about focusing on the negative aspects of their bodies? Were you teased about specific parts of your body? Then, write about your thoughts and feelings related to the origins of your body image and you will **come to understand how the story of your own personal body image evolved.**

- a. One of the historical causes of my negative body image is _____.
My thoughts and feelings about this are: _____.
- b. Another historical cause of my negative body image is _____.
My thoughts and feelings about this are: _____.
- c. Another historical cause of my negative body image is _____.
My thoughts and feelings about this are: _____.
- d. Another historical cause of my negative body image is _____.
My thoughts and feelings about this are: _____.

- 3) Past influences are only a part of your body image, The most powerful forces come from how you think and behave in the present. Learn about acceptance of your here-and-now body image.** Accept and neutralize your negative body image emotions. The most powerful forces come from how you think and behave in the present.

List four ways you will treat your body with love, compassion and respect as you go through the process of weight loss and embrace recovery from obesity:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

4) You feel what you think. How you feel about your looks is greatly influenced by your privately held beliefs, interpretations, and thought patterns. Most people have particular assumptions about the importance and influence of their looks – unchecked assumptions can lead to trouble. Learn how to “change your mind.” (Hmmm... seems to me you’ve heard this from me already!)

List four positive thoughts you will say to yourself when you find yourself thinking or speaking negatively about your body:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5) When you think about your own looks, you carry on a type of inner conversation I call Private Body talk. If your Private Body Talk is permeated with mental mistakes or distortions, it will devastate your body image. Listen in on your Private Body Talk, identify your own problematic thought patterns and create a New Inner Voice to communicate with yourself about your looks and how you feel about them.

List three negative thoughts you repeatedly tell yourself in regard to your body. Following each, write a sentence using a new inner voice that reminds you of something positive about your body:

1. _____
Positive statement: _____
2. _____
Positive statement: _____
3. _____
Positive statement: _____

As you go about the business of living healthy – doing the things it takes to live at a health weight and learning to appreciate and love your body – think of me – your Recovery Conscience – and remember one of my favorite sayings, which I introduced earlier in this video. Make it one of your mantras:

**My Health. My Responsibility. This Day. Every Day.
MAINTAIN AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE!**

All comments regarding MindPrep and/or the homework are appreciated.
Please email comments to info@mindbodyhealthservices.com. Thank you.