



Chicago Athletic Clubs
NUTRITION FORUM

Week Two: *Hunger*

- if you're hungry, it's time to eat-

A note about willpower

willpower; *noun*

Definition:
energetic determination

Synonyms:
restraint, self-control, self-discipline

Preferred Definition:
the power to carefully consider consequences and make decisions based on our best long-term interests

Obviously we have the ability to evaluate consequences and make decisions accordingly.

- BUT -

- Willpower is not unlimited. If our days are spent in constant decision-making-mode our willpower will fatigue.
- Willpower cannot overcome biology. Our bodies need food just as they need air and water. We can't hold our breath indefinitely regardless of willpower.



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Imagine a time when you were stuck late at work. You're feeling frustrated that you can't make it home on time and you've already spent the whole day making one difficult decision after another. When you finally get in your car to head home you realize you haven't eaten anything except a snack bar since breakfast. You have salmon and veggies (a meal you usually enjoy) in the fridge at home. But you're so hungry you decide to just order a pizza instead. Before you know it, you've eaten much more than you intended and now you feel uncomfortable full.



What hungry
looks like . . .

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This is Lilly, my now three year old rescue dog. When we adopted Lilly, she was all skin and bones. Every single one of her ribs were visible. Not only was she malnourished, she was also a growing puppy and needed lots of nourishment to grow. In those first few months, it was painfully clear just how starved Lilly had been. She completely lost it around food. When left alone, she would break in to “unbreakable” food storage bins and eat until her stomach was so bloated it was difficult for her to walk.

Food scarcity, hunger, and deprivation lead to a primal drive to overeat.

A few more definitions

hunger

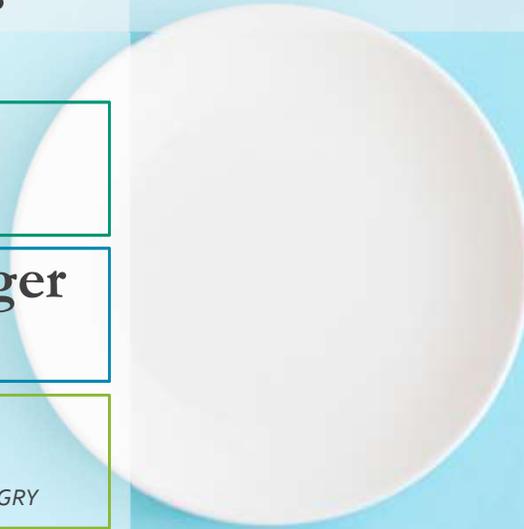
Definition:
the biological need to eat

physiological hunger

Definition:
the physical symptoms of hunger

primal hunger

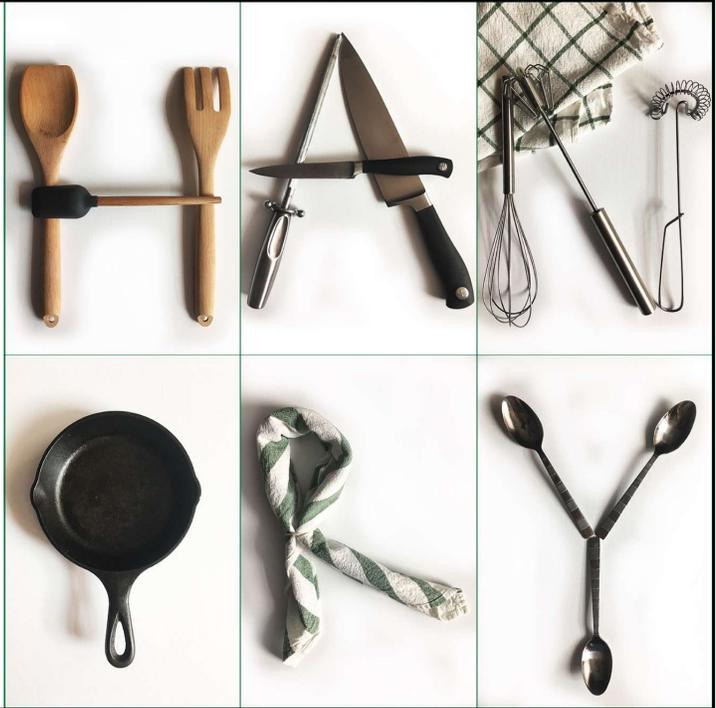
Definition:
fear of starvation ; beyond physical hunger ; HANGRY



HANGRY, defined as irritable or angry because of hunger, was recently added to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary

But wait, if hanger has become so commonplace that it's now officially a word, shouldn't we all be losing weight?

How can we all be so hangry in the midst of an obesity epidemic?



If you're hungry, it's time to eat

Seriously, our bodies need food!

Compensatory Biological Response

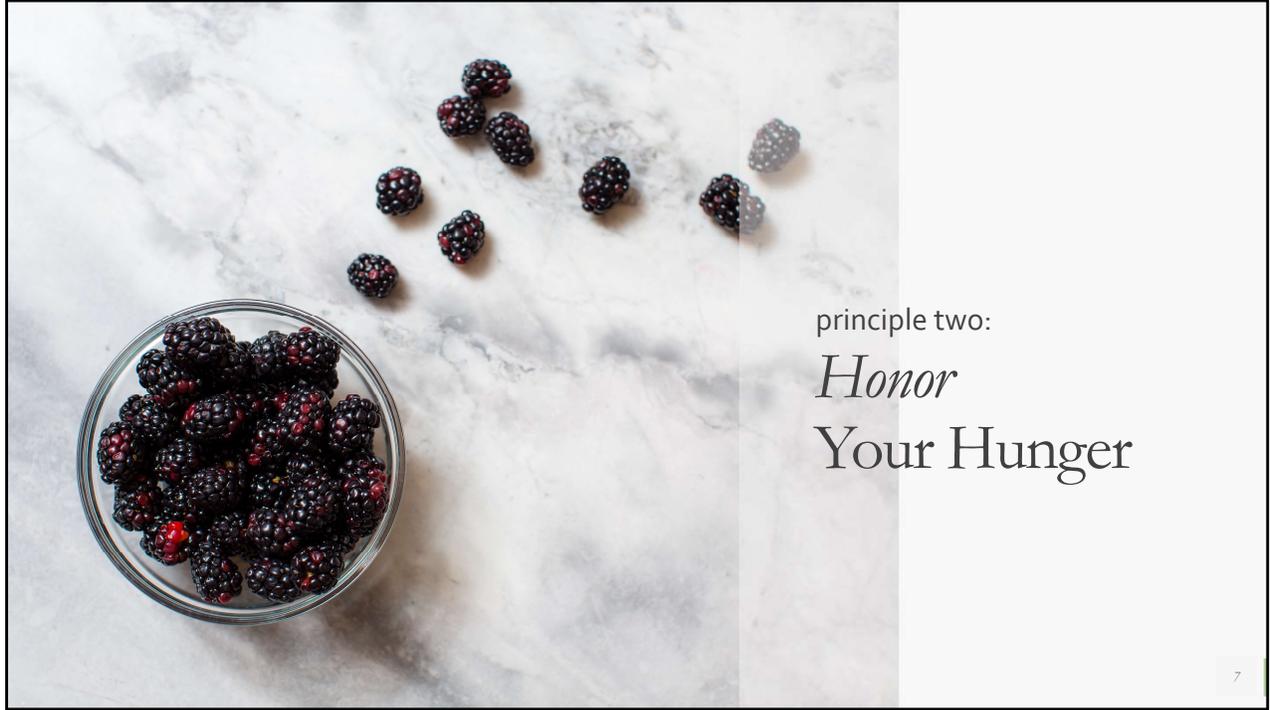
- » Imagine holding your breath underwater for a long period of time.
 - When you come up for air, you'll gasp dramatically.
 - No matter how much "willpower" you have, it's unlikely you'll take a dainty, controlled breath.
 - When we under-eat our bodies overcompensate with feelings of extreme hunger.

Our bodies freak out when they're starving.

- » Multiple studies have shown the consequences of starvation on the human body.
 - Increased intensity of hunger. Hunger becomes insatiable.
 - Preoccupation with food ; constant food thoughts.
 - Eating in excess of metabolic needs.

But I'm not starving . . .

- » Diets = prolonged starvation
- » Meal skipping = short term starvation



principle two:

Honor
Your Hunger

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Complete the “Hunger Awareness and Responsiveness Questionnaire”

Am I really hungry?

Recognize your hunger

What does hungry feel like to you?

- » Stomach grumbling, mild headache, feeling slightly irritable, tired, or unfocused.
- » These are biological signs of hunger and it means it's time to eat!

Hunger Silence:

- » You may silence hunger through chronic dieting, numbing (drinking water/tea), or distraction.
- » Stress blunts hunger signals
 - Fight or flight system is activated
 - Blood flow is diverted away from stomach to extremities resulting in decreased hunger cues

- ✓ Your body uses hunger as a gentle reminder to eat. If you don't eat your hunger will fade.
- ✓ Over time your body stops sending these hunger signals making it nearly impossible for you to recognize your biological hunger. Now you're eating to satisfy your primal hunger.
- ✓ This is irrational and overwhelming hunger and often leads to overeating.

See “Getting to Know Your Hunger” worksheet for more details on recognizing your hunger and identifying different hunger and fullness levels

Am I really hungry?

Where is your hunger coming from?

Remember that true hunger is the biological need to eat.

- » Stomach grumbling, mild headache, feeling slightly irritable, tired, or unfocused.
- » These are biological signs of hunger and it means it's time to eat!

Appetite:

Appetite, or the desire to eat without the physiological need for food, can be triggered by a number of stimuli:

- » **Visual Hunger:** aka the See Food Diet (I see it, I eat it!).
- » **Aroma:** the smell of baking brownies or brewing coffee.
- » Usually this is an *impulsive* desire for food.
- » Ask yourself:
 - Am I really hungry?
 - Is this a food I typically desire or enjoy?
 - What triggered this craving?

Habit:

Sometimes our food habits may trick us into believing we're hungry:

- » **Snacks:** Is a snack really necessary to address your hunger or are you simply used to eating one?
- » **Food Quantity:** Do you always eat two pieces of toast with breakfast even if you're more/less hungry today?
- » Ask yourself:
 - Am I really hungry?
 - Is there something I enjoy about this experience other than eating?
 - Am I bored? Do I want a break?

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Appetite can be a powerful motivator to eat. Imagine you're just finished a delicious meal at your favorite restaurant. You're comfortably full and have decided to stop eating. But then the dessert cart comes out and everything looks delicious! In this case you aren't hungry but you do really like gelato (which they have) so you decide on a small scoop. Make sure to eat mindfully, really savor the smell, taste, and texture of your dessert, and stop as soon as your craving for dessert is satisfied.

Or maybe you're in line at the home improvement store and the candy in the check out display catches your eye. All of a sudden you really want a Snickers. This is impulsive – you would never have thought about having a Snickers if you hadn't just seen it in front of you. Maybe you actually *are* hungry. In that case, consider if the Snickers is really the food you want or if maybe you need a more nutritious snack or meal. If you aren't hungry simply say “no” to the Snickers just as you would say “no” to the trashy magazine or fancy chap stick right next to all the candy.

Learning to honor your hunger

Before eating, check in with your body.

- » Ask yourself:
 - Am I really hungry?
 - How hungry am I?
 - Am I overly hungry?
 - How does my hunger feel? (Pleasant? Uncomfortable?)
- » If you're hungry it's time to eat!
- » If you're not hungry it might not be the right time to eat
 - With a few exceptions!

If you don't typically experience hunger:

- » Make it a priority to check in with your body.
- » Take a few deep breaths and try to limit distractions.
- » Now bring your attention to your **stomach**.
 - Does it feel full? Empty? Bloating? Is it growling or crampy?
- » Now check in with your **brain**.
 - Do you have the beginnings of a headache? Are you having trouble concentrating? Are you feeling tired?
- » Ideally you'll want to pause every 2-3 hours to examine your hunger. You may need to set an alarm or try a breathing or medication app as a reminder.
- » **Don't ignore your hunger or skip a check in!** It's not a phone call or an e-mail that you can look at later. It's your body telling you you need to eat to survive!

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It can be disappointing when you realize that you really aren't hungry especially if you were looking forward to a certain meal. Remind yourself that you won't enjoy your food as much and you may overeat when you eat without feeling hungry.

You may choose to eat when you aren't hungry if you know it will be a while before you have another opportunity to fuel your body.



Eating as *Self-Care*
- nourish to flourish -

Nourishment Plan



- » If you are under chronic stress it may be difficult to rely on your hunger signals to tell you when to eat.
- » While this may seem to contradict the ideas of Intuitive Eating, remember that stress can interfere with the biological processes that initiate hunger signals.
- » Follow these tips to help you build a nourishment plan:
 - Keep enjoyable snacks on hand
 - Eat every 4 to 5 hours regardless of hunger
 - Plan for meals that match your energy level
 - Build a general pattern of eating (regular meals and snack) that works for you

Unconditional permission to eat

You're allowed to eat no matter what!

- » You don't need to workout to earn the right to eat
- » You don't need to restrict your intake if you're planning a big dinner later
- » You don't need to cut your calories or fast if you ate more than usual yesterday

Remember that your body can regulate it's own intake. If you ate more than usual yesterday either

- a) you may have needed those calories or
- b) your hunger cues will diminish *naturally* in the following days.



More on this next week!

Know your hunger

- » Use the “Getting to Know Your Hunger” chart as a companion to your food journal.
- » Review the “Self-Care Assessment” and note any categories (physical, emotional, or boundaries) where there are multiple attunement disrupters. Reflect on what you can do to address these disrupters.
- » Chose two elements of the Nourishment Plan to address in the coming week:
 - Keep enjoyable snacks on hand
 - Eat every 4 to 5 hours regardless of hunger
 - Plan for meals that match your energy level
 - Build a general pattern of eating (regular meals and snack) that works for you



