



**X-PERT
HEALTH**

© Dr Trudi Deakin 2017

X-PERT Weight and Wellbeing



**Healthier
Lifestyle,
Happier
You!**

Handbook

Version 2

Contents

X-PERT Weight and Wellbeing - What is it?	3
Programme Summary	4
Session 1: Energy Balance	
Benefits of Weight Loss	6
Eat Less, Move More	7
Breaking the Diet Cycle	9
Weight Loss Myths	10
Top Tips	11
7 Lifestyle Factors for Optimal Health	13
Setting a Goal	15
Session 2: Nutrition for Health	
Nutrition for Health	20
Dietary Approaches	21
What is a Portion?	29
Essential for Any Dietary Approach	30
Real versus Processed Food	31
Making Food Choices	32
Session 3: Practical Considerations	
Top 10 Food Shopping Tips	52
Reading and Understanding Food Labels	54
Top 10 Tips for Dining Out (or Ordering In)	59
Session 4: Digestion and Body Weight	
What Happens to Food When We Eat It?	62
The Power of Protein	64
Foods for Fullness	65
Hormonal Obesity	66
Insulin Resistance	67
Session 5: Carbohydrate Awareness	
Carbohydrate Awareness	69
What is Your Carb Tolerance?	72
Glycaemic Index	73
Fibre and How It Protects Us	74
Gut Microbiota	76
Examples of Carbohydrate-Containing Foods	78
Replacements for Starchy Carbs	84
How Much Carbohydrate Am I Having?	86

Session 6: Fat Awareness

Fat Awareness	88
Nutritional Ketosis	91

Session 7: Eating Frequency

Intermittent Fasting	93
Intermittent Fasting Myths	95
Intermittent Fasting Tips	96

Session 8: Dealing With Challenges

Dealing With Challenges	97
Weight Stigma	99
Dietary Self-Assessment Guidance	100

Session 9: Stress, Sleep and the Psychology of Eating

Stress	103
Meditation	105
Sleep	106
Causes of Hunger	107
Identifying Psychological Eating	108
Taking Control of Psychological Eating	109

Session 10: Physical Activity

Benefits of Physical Activity	113
Physical Activity and Weight Loss	114
Increasing Activity Levels	115
Types of Physical Activity	116
Resistance Exercises and HIIT: Examples	117
Mobility Exercises	119
Weekly Activity Log	120

Session 11: Health Check

Health Results	121
Possible Longer-Term Complications	128

Session 12: Are You an X-PERT?

Setting a Goal: The Way Forwards	131
Top Tips for Maintenance	132
What Next?	133
Where Can I Find More Information?	134

Meal Ideas and Recipes	135
Weight Record	139
Monitoring Health	140

Causes of Hunger

Lots of people eat when they don't really need to. This usually means they end up eating too much, which causes weight gain. Understanding what causes hunger, and how to identify when you might be eating for the wrong reasons, can be an important first step towards preventing this. Hunger comes in two main forms: true hunger and psychological hunger.

True hunger is when you feel the urge to eat because your body needs nutrients or energy. This is important, as it helps to make sure your body gets enough of the things it needs. But when people have insulin resistance and high insulin levels they can experience this type of hunger a lot, because even when they have plenty of fuel in the body (in the form of stored glucose and fat) they struggle to use this for energy. Reducing insulin levels will help the body use fat for fuel, and reducing insulin resistance will help the body use glucose for energy more easily. This helps to reduce hunger levels; as does eating real foods, as they provide the body with lots of important nutrients.

Making sure you don't eat too often can also help reduce true hunger. This is because your insulin levels reduce when you aren't eating, which lets your body use its fat stores for energy. This might just mean avoiding snacking, or some people go further by trying intermittent fasting (see pages 93 to 96). It might take a little while to get used to eating less often (see below), but people can adjust with time, and there can be big benefits.

Psychological hunger is when you want to eat for reasons other than true hunger. It can cause you to overeat, leading to weight gain. Possible causes of psychological eating include:



Routine or habit – it is very easy to fall into a routine, such as having three meals plus snacks every day; or always grabbing something to eat when you sit down to watch a film, for example. It can be difficult to break routines/habits without feeling hungry, but this is often because you are used to eating at certain times rather than because you actually need to eat.



Emotions – people often turn to food for comfort when they feel negative emotions such as sadness, loneliness or stress. Food is often eaten in response to positive emotions such as joy or happiness too.



Boredom – many people have the urge to eat when it seems like there is nothing else to do. This might result in grazing at work or home, or regularly going out for meals. Unfortunately, healthy foods are rarely chosen when people eat because they are bored; though that is not to say that it isn't possible to eat healthily when dining out (see pages 59 and 60 for more).



Addiction – some people feel as if they are unable to resist certain foods, and like they cannot control how much of them they eat when they do have them. This is explored more on page 110.

If you think you might be eating for psychological reasons it is essential that this is dealt with, as it can undo many of the benefits you might see from improving the quality of your diet. Help with identifying and dealing with this is included on pages 108 and 109.

Making changes to what you eat can go a long way to helping you reach your health goals, but it is important to recognise and deal with any issues related to psychological eating too. This will help you avoid eating for the wrong reasons, and reduce the risk of you choosing foods that aren't suitable for your new dietary approach.



How would you know if you are eating for psychological reasons?

Some of the telltale signs that you are eating for psychological reasons are listed below, but you may be aware of other reasons that aren't included here. Try to be mindful when you feel like you want to eat, and ask yourself if you are truly hungry, or if you could be seeking food for other reasons. Common signs that you might be eating for psychological reasons include:

- 1 You crave certain foods despite feeling physically full.
- 2 You are often preoccupied with food and think about it a lot of the time.
- 3 When you eat certain foods you almost always eat them in large quantities in a short period of time.
- 4 You often eat to the point of feeling uncomfortable and bloated.
- 5 Eating makes you feel out of control and/or guilty.
- 6 You make excuses (to yourself and others) about why you should eat.
- 7 You hide your eating behaviour from your family, friends and work colleagues.
- 8 You feel more determined to eat healthier foods and lose weight after an uncontrolled eating episode.
- 9 You understand that your eating behaviour is causing health problems but you do not feel like you can control it.
- 10 You can't stop eating at certain times of the day, e.g. during the evening.
- 11 You often use specific foods as a reward or to make yourself feel better.

If you can relate to some of the things described above you may have an unhealthy relationship with food. The next page explores a number of options that might help you to deal with this.

Although psychological eating can be a major problem there are a number of possible solutions. We've included some suggestions below, but there are other options beyond those included here, and you may be able to think of some others that could work for you.

Tops tips for taking charge of psychological eating:

1. Be mindful of what foods you buy. If you don't buy trigger foods, you won't eat them! Ask for support from family, friends and work colleagues to help you avoid comfort, snack or trigger foods. It will be better for their health too! If you do buy these types of foods for other family members try to keep them out of view to reduce temptation.

2. If you know boredom is a trigger, have a list of options ready to keep yourself busy when you don't have anything else to do. Try to find healthy activities, such as going for a walk, to distract yourself when this happens.



3. When you feel hungry consider if the feeling is true hunger. Thirst can often be mistaken for hunger - so make yourself a drink and keep busy to see if the hunger disappears.



4. Choose nutritious, minimally processed foods as much as possible, and make sure you include plenty of foods you enjoy as part of your new way of eating. This will help reduce hunger and maximise satisfaction, both of which will reduce temptation.



Restricting carbs will also help you to avoid insulin spikes, which may further help to reduce food cravings.

5. Take action to reduce stress, as we often turn to food when we are stressed (see pages 103 and 104).

6. Make sure you have enough good quality sleep (see page 106).



7. Keep a food and mood diary, where you note how you are feeling every time you eat. This can help you to identify how different moods affect what (and when) you eat. A template to help with this is available at www.xperthealth.org.uk/forums.

8. Don't drink alcohol too often, or to excess (see page 50). Alcohol makes it more likely that you will make poor food related choices.

9. Don't use food as a reward. Find other ways to treat yourself, such as meeting up with a friend or watching a movie. Putting the money you would have spent on food into a kitty to save for something special can be a good motivator too.



10. Try to be patient, to give any changes you have made a chance to work. As noted before, lifestyle changes are not always easy, and it can take time to break old habits. It is therefore important to stick with things to see if they are right for you.

Further support - If you do not feel that any of these tips are right for you, or if you have tried some and are still struggling to manage your eating, you may wish to seek advice from your healthcare team. They should be able to direct you to specialist services, if this is needed.

Online resources are available from organisations such as Mind UK (www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/food-and-mood) and the NHS (www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mindfulness.aspx), as well as from forkintheroad.co.uk.

Whether you can be truly addicted to food or not is still debated, but for people who experience feelings of this nature it doesn't really matter what label you put on it. What is clear is that for many it is difficult to avoid certain foods and/or to control eating in certain situations. There are also a lot of similarities in the way this affects people compared to what is seen with other addictions. It is therefore essential that this issue is recognised, and that individuals who experience any addiction-like feelings are provided with suitable support.

A major cause of this problem is the way many modern foods are produced. Food manufacturers combine ingredients in a manner that makes people want to eat more of them. The body has pathways in place to promote hunger (or fullness)



based on the availability of energy and nutrients, but the way lots of ultra-processed foods are designed overrides these control mechanisms.

One of the main ways these foods do this is through causing a pleasure response, with both the texture and flavour of ultra-processed foods contributing to this. The brain is wired to respond to things that it likes. These foods can have a powerful impact on the pleasure centres in the brain, triggering the desire for more of them. In some people this desire becomes a need, and they feel like they cannot resist it.

The foods that have the biggest impact on these pleasure centres are foods that contain refined carbohydrates AND processed fats; a combination found in many junk foods (including crisps, cakes and a wide range of other baked goods). They also tend to be easy to chew, though often have a crunchy element too which people find pleasant. Sweet and salty tastes also have an effect on these pleasure responses, though the extent of this will be different for different people. It is important that people who struggle to manage their eating behaviour find which foods are triggers for them.

These feelings of addiction can also be linked to some of the factors introduced on page 107, so it is not necessarily just the properties of the food that are the problem. For example, some people feel like they need to eat certain foods to provide them with comfort, or even as a reward, in certain situations. Where this is the case, it is important the triggers are recognised, and steps are taken to try and reduce or remove them. Where the triggers cannot be removed, people should try to change their response to them to something that does not involve food.



Some of the steps for recognising and dealing with psychological eating that were introduced on pages 108 and 109 may be helpful here. However, like other addictions, additional help and support may be required. Where this is the case, you should speak with your healthcare team. Useful information and resources can also be found at: www.phcuk.org/far/.

It is also important to acknowledge that the common suggestion for people to have "everything in moderation" is useless in this situation. It is fairly unhelpful advice anyway, as it lacks any real meaning and provides no practically useful information. But with foods that are designed to make you want to eat more of them, as many ultra-processed foods are, it can be almost impossible to control your eating when you have them. It is therefore essential that trigger foods are identified, and it will probably be necessary to cut them out entirely.

Managing Relapses

For most people the journey towards better health is not a straight line. It is common for people to relapse into old habits, and/or make choices which are not a good fit for their new lifestyle. It is important to recognise this, and to think about ways to reduce the risk of it happening. It can also be useful to put plans in place for what to do if it does.



When experiencing a set back some people lose motivation and give up. However, a relapse can actually be a good chance to reflect on what you are doing and why you are doing it, and to make improvements to your approach. Whatever the reason, it is important to accept that the relapse has happened and that this cannot be undone. People often feel shame when they do something they wish they hadn't, but this negative response is more likely to lead to other unhealthy behaviours. This can then become a vicious cycle. When thinking about what happened it is important to try and do this in a non-judgemental way. Understanding why it happened will help you to put plans in place to try and stop it happening again.

Preparing for a relapse

It is also important to acknowledge that relapses are common, and to think about what you will do if it does occur. Having an action plan that you can immediately put in place if something goes “wrong” can make it easier to respond in a positive way. This is sometimes called “If - then” planning, as you are thinking: “IF this happens, THEN I will do this”.

If you do experience a relapse, some of the suggestions below may be helpful:

- Remind yourself that a slip up does not mean any previous progress is wasted. You are not back to square one.
- Forgive yourself. You are only human, and we all make mistakes.
- Remind yourself of your goal, and WHY you want to achieve it. Reconsider if this is the right goal for you, and if your reasons are a strong enough motivator.
- Think about if the changes you are trying to make are a good fit for your needs, preferences and lifestyle. If they are not it will be difficult for you to stick to them.
- Explore the relapse itself, and what triggered it. Once you understand the cause, make plans to reduce or remove the risk of it happening again. This may mean coming up with different ways to respond to a similar situation.
- If the cause is not something you can easily reduce or remove, consider what sources of support you have to try and help you manage this. For example, you might benefit from talking to supportive friends or family members, or you may wish to speak to your healthcare team.

Reducing the risk of relapsing

Taking some time to think about what might trigger a relapse can help you to avoid one. Developing routines and new habits that support your new lifestyle, like making shopping lists or having a regular meet up with a friend to go for a walk, can be helpful.



Considering situations which are more likely to lead to temptation is important too, to help you plan for them. For example, having a plan for what to do when going out for a meal with work colleagues, or even for how to avoid buying trigger foods when you go shopping, can help you to take more control over your eating.