

# Mindful Eating: Emotional Eating and Food Craving Management Group

## Class 5 CBT

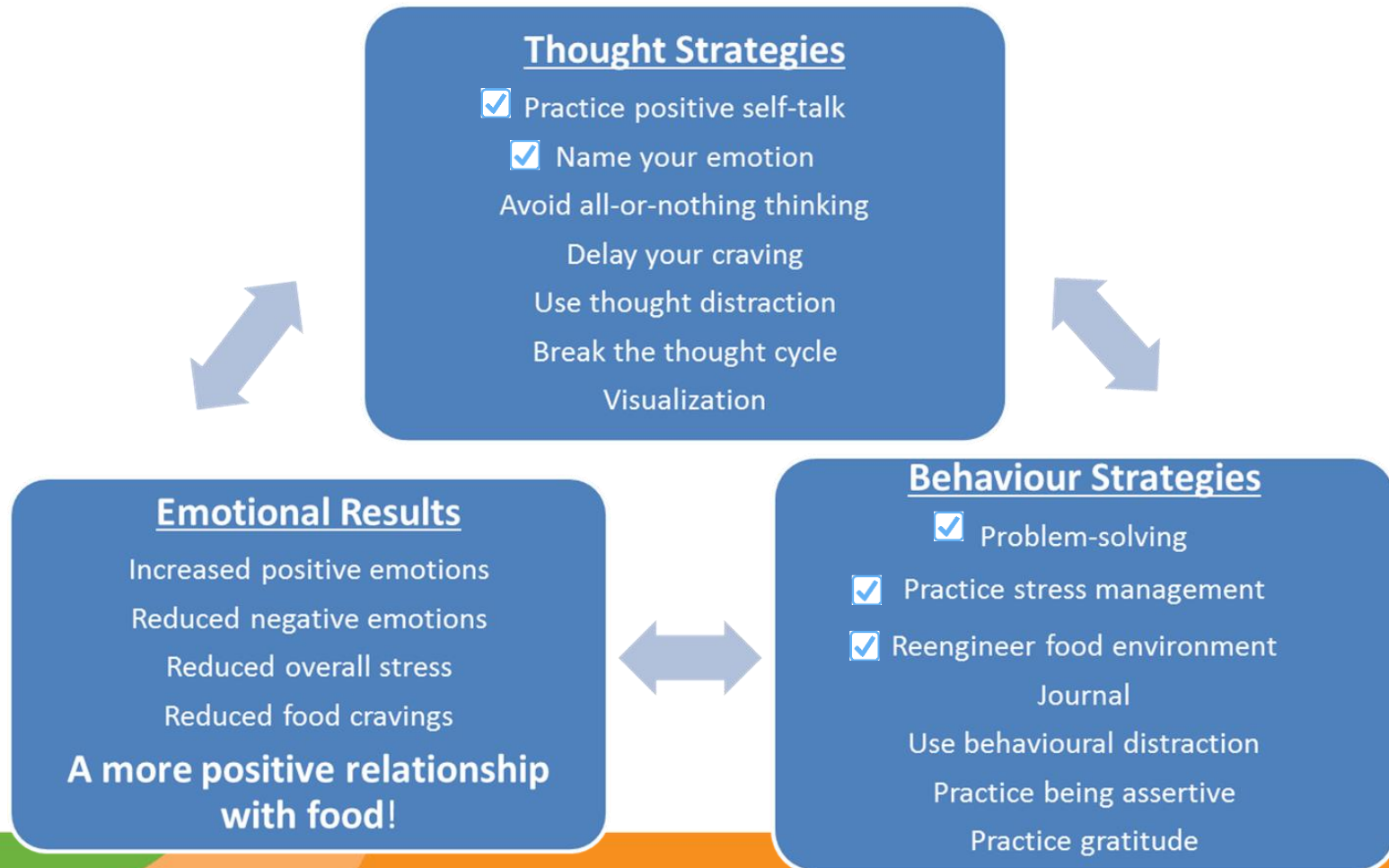


# Class 5 outline



- Check-in
- Journal
- Avoid all or nothing thinking
- Distraction
- Breaking the thought cycle
- Visualization
- Delay your craving
- Mindfulness Exercise: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

# CBT: Cognitive Behavioural Model



# Journaling



Journaling may be helpful for some people to increase awareness and insight, promote change and growth and further develop your sense of self. Writing down thoughts and feelings about a problem or a stressful situation can help to reduce negative emotions.

It may be helpful to write about the connections you are making between thoughts, feelings and behaviours in your ME journal or your experiences in trying some of the different CBT strategies.

There is space to write down your thoughts here or in a separate journal. You can either practice free writing or use the questions below as a guide, or a combination of both.

*Looking at the ME journal, what connections do I notice between my thoughts, feelings and behaviors? How have my behaviours changed?*

*How have my feelings changed? What has been my experience with trying a new CBT strategy?*

*Am I experiencing a difficult emotion right now?*

*What am I noticing? What's coming up for me right now? (i.e. a thought, emotion, repetitive behavior or pattern)*

# Avoid all or nothing thinking



Life is not black and white. Why is it that we try to make food black and white? We often label food as *good* and *bad*. We see ourselves as being good or bad for eating this food.

What happens when we label a food as bad?

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What happens when we eat a food that we've labeled as bad?

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**How can we stop feeling like failures every time we eat?**

Re-frame our thoughts!

**Foods for the body** – physically nourishing foods.

Designed by Mother Nature to meet our nutritional and energy needs, to allow our body to function well and to help us feel our best.



**Foods for the soul** – mentally nourishing foods. Designed for pure plain pleasure!

We can enjoy both foods for the body and foods for the soul and still be healthy. Bring pleasure back to soul foods! Give yourself permission to eat any food while practicing mindful eating. Engage all of your senses (sight, smell, sound, touch, taste) especially when eating soul foods. Without doing so we are missing the entire point of eating them...pleasure!

How much soul foods are ok? Let your body be your guide! Practice mindful eating and pay attention to how your body responds. The goal is for you to feel your best both physically and emotionally without any feelings of guilt or deprivation.

This strategy can go a long way to healing your relationship with food.

# Distraction



Food can take our mind off our worries.

We often use food as a temporary distraction from uncomfortable feelings like sadness, stress, anger and anxiety.

But food can only provide temporary relief from these feelings. In addition, we know that eating while distracted can result in consuming more food than intended!

This strategy is about turning the tables on distraction and using it as an *intentional* response to a food craving.

**Don't forget to use STOP before using a CBT strategy.** *Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed with awareness and kindness.* Be sure to observe what is happening before proceeding. It's possible that the reason you're craving something to eat is because you're physically hungry (stomach hunger). In this case, it's important to honour your hunger and eat something. These strategies are not about ignoring or suppressing true hunger. If however, you determine that you are not truly hungry and are being triggered to eat due to an emotion (heart hunger), a rule (head hunger) or a craving (mouth hunger), you can choose to use a distraction technique.

We can distract ourselves by changing our behaviours (behavioural distraction) or by using the power of our mind (thought distraction).

# Behavioural distraction

**Behavioural distraction** – switch up what you’re doing to redirect your focus away from food. The best distractions are those that you can engage in fairly quickly, without much planning and that you do not currently associate with food or eating. For example, switching your activity to watching TV might not be a great plan for behavioural distraction as many people associate watching TV with eating.

## Examples:

- Go for a walk around the block
- Do 10 minutes of yoga or practice deep breathing
- Call a friend
- Work on a puzzle
- Do some knitting
- Have a bath
- Clean the floors
- Organize your ‘junk’ drawer
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# Thought distraction



**Thought distraction** - needs to be consuming enough to redirect mental focus away from thoughts of food or worries.

## Examples:

- Counting backwards from 100 in increments of 7
- Recite the alphabet backwards
- Try to remember your relatives birthdays
- Use the alphabet to recall names of flowers, countries, band names, song titles
- Plan a trip or think about all the countries you've visited in the past
- Try to recall the numbers worn by the players on a sports team
- Practice a visualization exercise

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# Visualization – guided imagery

Visualization using guided imagery can be a powerful and stress relieving form of thought distraction.

Examples:

- Relaxing on the beach
- Walking through a peaceful forest
- Relaxing at home

Create your own Peaceful Scene and practice returning to it every time you do any relaxation or deep breathing exercises or whenever you wish to turn off anxious thinking and calm yourself.

Ask yourself:

- What does the scene look like (colours, scenery)?
- What sounds are present?
- What is the temperature?
- What am I touching?
- What does the air smell like?



# Visualization - break the thought cycle



We can also use visualization techniques to change our thought patterns that can be triggering food cravings. When noticing a food craving, first use STOP (stop, take a breath, observe, proceed with awareness and kindness). If you observe that your food craving is caused by negative self-talk or worrisome thoughts, try using visualization to break the thought cycle!

Thoughts that are acting as eating triggers:

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# Using visualization to break the thought cycle

## Examples:

- Picture a large red stop sign
- Visualize yourself tossing or kicking the thought away and out of your mind
- See your trigger thoughts as words written
  - in the sand being erased by the sea
  - in the clouds and peacefully drifting away
  - on a chalkboard and being erased
  - In a bubble and watching it pop and disappear



# Visualization - enjoy the food in your mind!



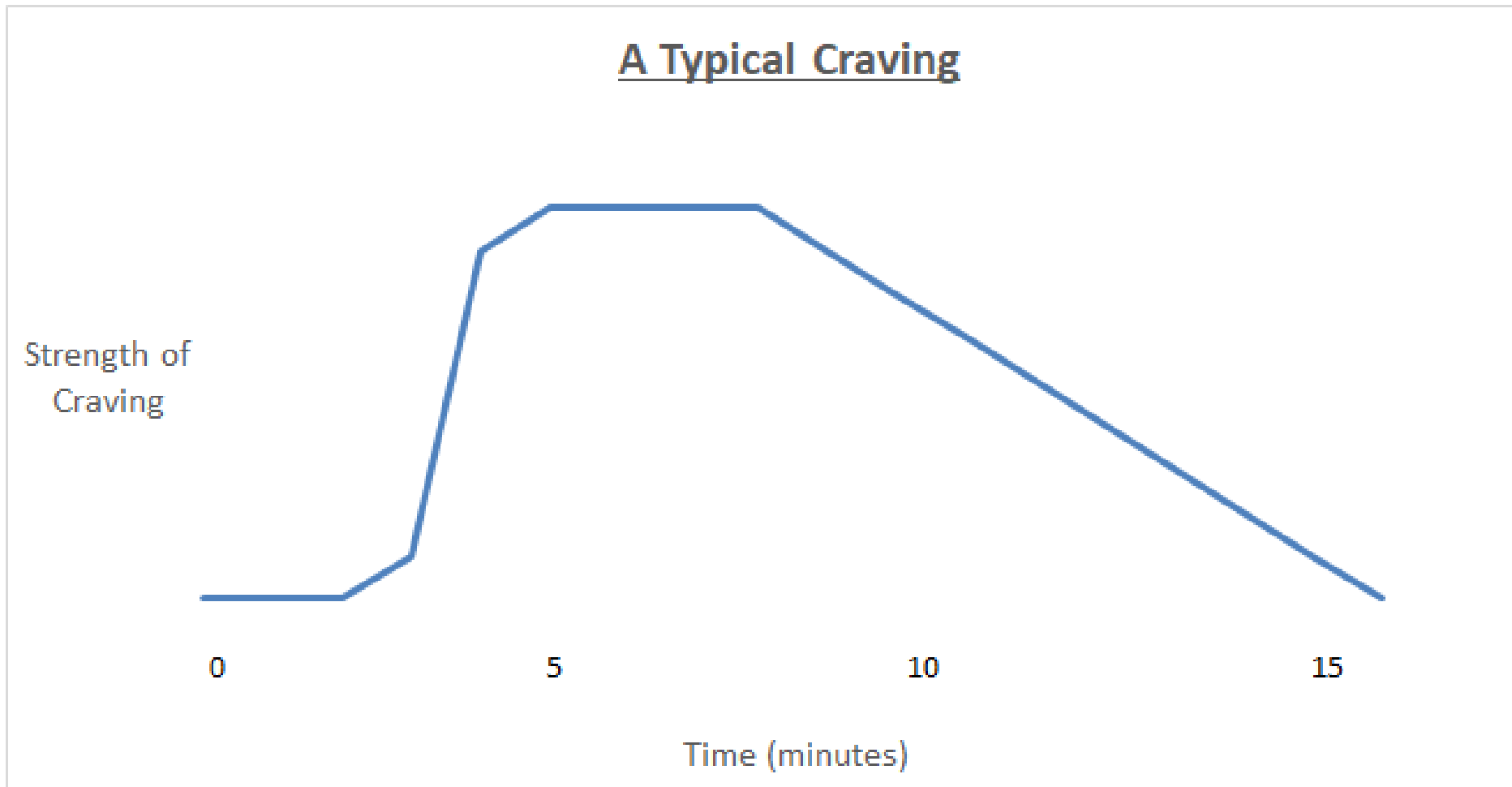
Rather than attempting to ignore the food you are craving, you could try embracing it! Harness the power of your mind.

Visualize the food you are craving – imagine how it looks, how it smells, how it tastes. Then take it a step further and visualize yourself actually eating this food.

Studies show that this type of visualization can be an effective way to reduce a food craving – it works if you actually envision eating the specific food that you are craving.

Picture yourself eating in a mindful way. Take your time and imagine how the food looks, how it smells, how it feels in your mouth, how it tastes. Visualize yourself eating as many bites of this food as you are craving. Relax and enjoy every bite!

# Delay your craving



# Delay your craving



**Use STOP before using a CBT strategy.** *Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed with awareness and kindness.* Observe what is happening before proceeding. Check in to determine if you're experiencing stomach hunger. Have you eaten regular meals today? Have you had enough to eat at your meals? Do not use this strategy as an attempt to "eat less". Honour your body and your hunger. If however, you have determined that you are not experiencing stomach hunger in this moment, you can try delaying your craving.

Give yourself **permission** to eat the food you are craving. This is not about depriving yourself. Rather, it is about creating additional space between the eating trigger/food craving and your automatic response of eating.

Start with delaying by 1 minute and gradually work up to 10-15 minutes. Consider using distraction or visualization while you delay. With time, you'll learn your own craving pattern and your cravings will become less frequent and less intense.

Be sure to reward yourself after each delay! Consider non-food related rewards such as self-praise. Repeat positive statements to yourself such as "I was stronger than my food craving", "I did it!", "I was successful in delaying my food craving".

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

A relaxation technique that involves tensing and relaxing individual muscle groups. Allows for effective release of physical tension thereby reducing overall tension and stress.

## Passive Muscle Relaxation

A relaxation technique that involves simply focusing on each individual muscle group without tensing them, and imagining them relaxing.



Image reference: <http://www.wallartprints.com.au/zen-art/>

# Weekly Challenges



- Continue to use your ME journal, practice mindful eating
- Use STOP to help manage food cravings
- Try journaling
- Avoid all-or-nothing thinking
- Try thought or behavioural distraction
- Practice a visualization exercise
- Try delaying your craving
- Practice progressive or passive muscle relaxation at home
- Write a SMART goal

Use this space to write a **SMART** goal.

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Make sure your goal is realistic:

How confident are you in achieving your goal?

1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 --- 6 --- 7 --- 8 --- 9 --- 10

If you're not at least 7/10, how can you tweak your goal to make it a little bit easier and increase your confidence?

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Consider barriers. Is there anything that might get in the way of you achieving your goal? If so, how might you overcome these barriers?

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# Track your progress



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

## **Evaluate/Repeat/Re-adjust:**

What went well?

What got in the way?

What could I do differently next time?

What are my next steps?