

6

When to Eat, How Much to Eat

Tune into your natural hunger signals. Eat whatever you want whenever you want, as long as you are physically hungry.



THE HUGS™ PROGRAM OFFERS NO SET DIET.

The positive result of a lack of structure is flexibility. You can replace your old way of eating with an improved and more healthful eating style. If you have been accustomed to following a diet, you may think that this method cannot work since there is no rigid pattern to follow. However, focus and flexibility can replace structure.

The focus is getting you to deal with the cause of your poor eating habits. Why did you get to this stage in the first place? The focus is to show you how to eat in a way that gives you more energy and keeps you satisfied. HUGS™ is a new concept of healthy eating and healthy living.



Follow the HUGS™ guidelines and balance your carbohydrates and protein sources, gradually cut back the fat content in your food choices and food preparation methods, and note when you are actually physically hungry. If you eat all the time, you won't give your body a chance to experience hunger. If you are used to dieting and starving, you may be out of tune with what real hunger is, especially if you have been ignoring it for a number of years. If you have recently stopped smoking, you too will be out of touch with your internal hunger signals. If you wait until you are too hungry, there is a danger of being famished, "gobbling" your food, and overeating. In these situations it's unlikely that you are tasting your food.

HUGS™ gives you permission to eat. The danger is that you may swing the other way and eat everything in sight. Can this happen? Long-term denial and deprivation of food can lead to a rebellion against dieting, whether you or someone else gives you the permission to eat. Permission to eat can be frightening because of the lack of rigid control. With HUGS™ you are taking charge. Rather than someone else learning to ride the bike for you, you are actually learning to ride it yourself. You are learning a new skill.

When you feel you can't or shouldn't have

When to Eat, How Much to Eat

something, you often desire it more. On the other hand, if you know you can have it, you might not want it as much. Realize that you are striving to bring the pendulum back to the middle so that you learn to eat like a nondieter, that is, someone who eats when he or she is physically hungry. Check how you feel 3 to 4 hours after eating to help you to tune into your natural hunger.

DO DIETERS THINK DIFFERENTLY?

Do you think like a nondieter? Two psychologists, Polivy and Herman, from Toronto,¹ gave 40 dieters and 40 nondieters 2 milkshakes each to drink followed by an offer of ice cream as part of a controlled study.



The dieters finished their milkshakes and ate the ice cream too. The nondieters ate very little ice cream once they finished the milkshakes. Why is there a difference between the actions of the dieters and the nondieters? The dieters' thinking is all-or-nothing thinking. "I blew my diet anyway, so I'll go for it and eat it all. Since I'll go back to dieting and depriving myself tomorrow, I'd better get my fill." Dieters either diet faithfully or not at all. Once they have been deprived for so long, they may not be able to control themselves. The pendulum has swung the other way.

Continue to observe nondieters and children. They are in tune with their natural hunger signals and those that signal appetite and fullness (physical satisfaction). What are they doing in order to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full? Try to model their actions.

Often dieters are perfectionists and their "absolutely perfect" mentality transfers to other aspects of their life as well. "I'll clean the house completely or not at all. I'm that type of person." It is this all-or-nothing thinking that can lead to frustration when something doesn't proceed perfectly. This type of rigid thinking does not allow a person to be human.

There is flexibility in the nondieter's thinking and this is how it differs from the dieter's thinking. The nondieters, once the milkshakes were finished, chose to eat very little ice cream because they were in tune with their bodies' feelings of hunger and fullness. They were satisfied with the milkshakes and were no longer hungry. The added fact that they knew they could have more ice cream when they wanted it decreased the need to have it immediately. The nondieters were tuning into their internal cues of

hunger. The dieters responded to the external cue of sight. "I see it—I want it!"

The second part of the Polivy and Herman study dealt with both groups being given no milkshakes, after which both groups were offered ice cream. This time the dieters ate no ice cream. The "all-or-nothing" response was: "I'm still on my diet, so since I did not start to eat anything illegal, I'll be able to forgo the ice cream. I have the willpower to say no."

The nondieters who did not have milkshakes but were offered ice cream ate a lot of ice cream. They were tuning into their internal hunger signals. The nondieters were physically hungry and therefore ate the offered ice cream.

DIET THINKING	NONDIET THINKING
"all-or-nothing"	listens to the body's needs
I will have it all or nothing at all	is flexible
perfectionist attitude	human—goes with the flow
responds to external cues of sight, smell, and power of suggestion	responds to internal cues—eats when hungry
out of touch with physical hunger—may eat in response to psychological hunger, i.e. when under stress	in tune with body's internal cues of physical hunger; listens to body, does not turn to food when dealing with problems such as stress
diet is in control	person is in control and decides when and what to eat
asks self, "Should I have it, do I need it?"	asks self, "Do I want it?"

How do you shift your thinking to be a nondieter? The first step is to acknowledge what you are doing and accept it, just as you accepted yourself as you are without condition. Without acceptance of yourself, too much energy is diverted toward feeling sorry for yourself and feeling negative.

An illustration of this is a neglected plant that grows tall, thin, and straggly as the energy is diverted upward. With a little caring, by snipping it, the

**When to Eat,
How Much
to Eat**

energy is no longer wasted but rather the nutrients and energy are used where they are most needed, for growth.

By accepting yourself, you use your energy to take care of yourself rather than divert your energy by criticizing yourself.

HUGS™ wants you to grow from within and burst forth with new shoots, as the plant does. So don't waste your energy being negative. Go with the flow and learn from your mistakes. *Care about yourself enough to listen to your body and find out what is really causing you to eat.* Ask yourself what is happening that you need to distract yourself by eating or worrying about your eating? Take a moment to reflect on reasons why you are eating.



When you eat for these reasons, are you really tasting your food or are you eating to drown your sorrows? Does food give you a temporary lift? Does it deal with the problem?

It's time to replace this dependency on food. Have confidence in yourself, trust yourself, believe in yourself. Only you can uncover the reasons for your eating and learn new techniques to deal with them more positively. Remember that if you feel you were not successful in the past, it is not you that failed but the diets that failed you. **Diets don't work.** You can succeed by getting rid of the diet and the diet mentality. As you

begin to discover yourself, you will be drawing on your inner self, that is, you will be internally motivated. Remember, *action creates motivation.* Once you have discovered why you are eating, take action.

Reasons For Eating

- boredom
- loneliness
- frustration
- stress
- anger
- rushed
- comfort food
- tension
- social occasion
- everyone else is eating
- happy
- sad
- "see-food" diet ("I see it, I want it")
- tired
- insomnia
- PMS

Now that you have discovered why you are eating, what do you do about it? Meet the causes of your eating head on. Eating only provides temporary relief from thinking of your other problems. These problems will recur if you don't deal with them and so will the eating. Catch yourself as you are reaching for the food and ask yourself, "Do I really want it or do I think I want it simply because it's there and everyone else is eating?" If you just follow the crowd then the calories are wasted and will end up on the waist. Part of life-style change is acquiring a taste for less fattening foods and learning to eat until you are satisfied, not stuffed. Eat only those things that you really want and only if you are hungry.

When you eat because of a happy event to celebrate something that you accomplished, the food becomes a reward. It is a social custom to eat at such times and this is why you feel that you need something as an external reward to complete the happiness. Try not eating and allow yourself to experience the pleasant feeling of accomplishment for itself.

Eating because you are sad, depressed, or angry may provide a temporary comfort that you are searching for. But the problem that brought on these feelings remains and must be dealt with. Do you feel that you must always be "up" and happy? What's wrong with allowing yourself to experience sad or frustrating emotions and working them through? It is part of normal life to go through these "ups and downs." Try to deal with the issues at hand. This will help to level off the roller coaster ride of emotions.

Loneliness and boredom and television seem to trigger the food munchies. Social occasions where there is drinking also empties many peanut bowls. Suddenly you are out of control, the peanut bowl is empty, and you don't even remember eating them.

Loneliness is often tied to not fully appreciating our own company. Nancy always goes into the "tea and toast" syndrome when her husband is away. After all, she has no one to cook for or to try to please. She reaches for the sweets to keep her company and to comfort her.

**When to Eat,
How Much
to Eat**

Wait a minute! You are worth the little extra effort to prepare a sit-down meal for yourself, and maybe even a candle to go with it. This is your free time; you can do whatever you want. It's your own time to reassess your goals and redirect your life, time to think things through or maybe just relax, clear your mind and enjoy some peaceful moments. Don't waste the moment by feeling sorry for yourself. You are special too!

You come home from work, tired. You eat, clean up, and then plunk yourself in front of television. There is nothing else to do so you might as well eat. Stimulation is in order. People tend to get into an everyday humdrum routine, taking the safe and easy route in life. Well, this route is also the boring route. Try to incorporate a little risk, a little excitement, a little adventure into your life. One of my favorite years of married life was the year we didn't have a television. We made our own fun and enjoyed simple things. Sure we need goals and direction to get somewhere in life, but we also need to make room for spontaneity and fun — even a little adventure now and then! When we grow up, we become more serious about life. Observe children once in a while and then attempt to bring out the child in you.

It's easy for food to become the center of attention, even for animals! When we first got our new kitten, we played with her frequently. In a couple of months we stopped. All of a sudden, before our very eyes, she became fat. We were told by our veterinarian to put her on a diet because she was too fat for her health, especially at such a young age. Of course dieting is totally against my philosophy. I would never put a child on a diet. Are animals different?

My husband and I decided to try an experiment. We began to play with the cat more. I play a version of floor hockey in the kitchen with her and Mitchell plays hide and seek. We enjoy it. It's therapeutic to play with animals. These days Dynamite is dashing around getting in her aerobics in her own way.

She has slimmed down naturally. Food is no longer the center of her attention. She eats, but she doesn't

only eat. Food has a new perspective for her. Dynamite lives by the HUGS™ philosophy now. She has interests other than food! So find that little excitement in life that can rejuvenate you. Observe others who have other hobbies and see how food fits into their lives.

Overeating at social occasions once in a while isn't an issue. It's part of being normal. The type of thinking to watch out for is dieting during the week, only to allow yourself to binge on the weekend. This is the diet mentality. Try eating the foods you desire more regularly, then when someone offers your favorite onion rings, you can eat a few and not crave them so much that you stuff yourself. Taste and savor and enjoy *without guilt* and you will be satisfied with less. You may slip back into the diet thinking from time to time. After all, it was part of you for many years. But if you are aware of this, you can overcome it.



If you can't sleep at night unless you get up for cookies and milk perhaps you shouldn't go to bed hungry. One of my clients, Betty, frequently had trouble sleeping. At 2:00 a.m. she got up for her snack and then went to sleep. Avoiding a snack prior to bed did not help her reduce her overall caloric intake. Rather, it prevented her from sleeping and she had to have a snack at an inconvenient time of the morning. If it has been over 3 to 4 hours since you ate supper, consider a little snack before going to bed. A small snack will not ruin your hunger for breakfast the next morning.

**Experiment and find out what works best for you.
Listen to your body!**

Karen was tired early in the evening but believed that she could stay up with the rest of the family. She ate to keep herself awake. Since she physically had no energy, she attempted to retrieve energy from food. Perhaps Karen's best action would be to go to bed early once in a while and realize that it is normal to be tired on some days. However, if the tired feeling persists, she should make an attempt to incorporate more activity and regular meals into her eating pattern to give her energy level a boost!

**When to Eat,
How Much
to Eat**

Enough sleep is essential. It's a basic physiological need. Being sleep-deprived is not an indication of strong character or willpower. It is harmful to your health. Yet in this fast-paced, competitive society, sleep is often undermined and sacrificed. It's considered a waste of time in an age when people are valued for what they do, not who they are. The danger is that we may become workaholics, attaching our self-worth to tremendous achievements. Our goals may be impossible as we're driven to prove ourselves, to be dynamic with boundless energy. This affects our mental health, sleep, and eating patterns.

Learn to take everything a step at a time. Keep your goals within comfortable reach and build in balance along the way. Be satisfied to be the best you can be and don't push yourself beyond your capacity.

If your schedule is so busy that you can't take time for a meal, bring along handy snacks such as cheese, crackers, bread, rolls, fruit, or yogurt. Healthful snacks are not only a wise alternative to a skipped meal, but they can help you make the transition to taking the time to eat. Building in some relaxing "time out" from your rushed schedule gives you a chance to nourish your body and refuel your energy reserve. Your productivity will increase because you will be more alert. You will have a clear mind to keep you working those extra hours. Try it and feel the difference! Pausing to eat can help you to deal with stressful situations better than when your blood sugar is low.

Sufficient restful sleep, proper nutrition, physical activity, relaxation, building in time for yourself, and knowing when to pull back helps you to deal with stress more easily. Ignoring your body's signals and not taking care of it may result in burn out and time off work. Think about it and re-adjust your life accordingly.

If you eat when you are under stress this kind of eating is strictly automatic. You are trying to solve your problem while eating and you are definitely not focusing on the food. Once again, wasted calories are ingested. Dealing with the issue is the answer for you.

YOU COUNT,
CALORIES
DON'T

Premenstrual syndrome known as PMS is a normal biological occurrence that bothers many women prior to the onset of the menstrual period. Realize that you may be hungrier more frequently due to the peaking hormone level of progesterone which causes the level of your blood sugar to drop down. Because of this, hunger strikes more often. The answer is to eat more frequently, and understand that giving in to those cravings for caffeine in the form of chocolate or coffee may aggravate your blood sugar swings.

Don't deny yourself the foods you like. If you eat according to the HUGS™ balance you can leave room for these foods, but you will have them on a fuller stomach rather than an empty one. If you have these cravings, you may simply be hungry. Don't ignore your natural hunger signals that occur more frequently during this time of the month. Stay tuned to your body's changing needs and observe to find out what your body needs.

The "I see it, I want it" mentality will occur less frequently as you switch into the nondiet thinking and normalize your eating and life-style habits.

Try to get rid of the diet mentality and learn to think like a nondieter. If you like butter don't deny yourself. When Donna replaced butter with margarine, she initially used less, because she didn't like the taste. Eventually, she felt deprived. Once she resumed eating butter, she binged on it. Donna's diet thinking, which indicates substitution of foods for less enticing items, was wrong for her. Dieters feel that if they don't like the substituted food, they won't eat as much. That may be true temporarily, but eventually the dieter feels deprived and binges on the forbidden food.



The HUGS™ way involves eating what you like but gradually cutting back the quantity of fat foods, so that you are eating bread with butter, not butter with bread.

Fat adds flavor but tends to take away the texture by making the food soggy. You can experience both. Use a little less butter and eventually you will enjoy the

**When to Eat,
How Much
to Eat**

real taste of bread without the grease. Experimenting with different types of whole grain breads will allow you to discover a new dimension in eating. Or add a protein source to give you some moisture and more nutrient content with less “fat” calories.

Take the case of 9-year-old Paul who butters his toast only in the center because that’s the way he likes it. Along comes Mom who says, “No, no, Paul, that’s not the way you butter toast. Spread the butter out to the sides, otherwise it will be too hard.” Like Paul, most children naturally have a taste for less fattening foods until we as parents impose our own preferences on them—just as our parents likely did to us.

Does HUGS™ say that because “fat goes to fat” you shouldn’t eat the potato the way you like it—loaded with butter? Certainly not. HUGS™ encourages more carbohydrates and potatoes have carbohydrates. Try to acquire a taste for the potato with butter rather than butter with the potato. You can use substitutes (margarine); however, margarine contains the same number of fat calories. Sour cream is a lower fat choice. But if you really miss the butter, then use it and gradually decrease the quantity. Within a few months, you will enjoy your potato with less total fat content and not feel deprived. Gradually you will acquire a taste for less fattening foods. Low-fat gravy is also an excellent choice. It is full of flavor. Experience it and you may be converted!

The diet mentality of all-or-nothing thinking instead of gradual change hampers the progress you are making. Debbie had a sandwich for lunch without fries and then had a chocolate bar. She thought that she had failed because she gave in to her craving. But it was the time of month that her hormonal change caused her to crave chocolate. On pursuing this instance, we discovered that normally Debbie would have eaten a sandwich and fries followed by 2 chocolate bars. She realized that she was progressing! Note the positive changes you are making. When you occasionally fall into the all-or-nothing thinking, don’t be too hard on yourself.

Kick your mind into gear and shift into thinking like a nondieter. What about those chocolate almonds or candies that you cannot refuse at a party. Other people take one or two and are satisfied. Why can't you? Have you been denying yourself these foods, regarding them as special treats only to be eaten at certain special occasions? Remember that denial leads to the eventual binge. Do you really taste these chocolates or is it automatic eating?

You may be eating them for one of the following reasons:

- 1. because they are there, an external cue,**
- 2. because you think you may not have them again for a while, or**
- 3. because it's a special occasion so it's all right to eat on a special occasion.**

Dieters have difficulty distinguishing between "should," "need," and "want." Dieters may feel that they always want a dessert after a meal because it is part of the meal. Habit may be confused with the real desire to have it. However, realizing that you can have it later on and accepting this fact will help to clarify the difference between "want" and "need." Just because it is there and you see it is no reason to eat it. Eat it only if you are physically hungry for the food.

Should I have the cookie? Do I need the cookie? These questions reflect the diet thinking. Replacing this question with "Do I want the cookie?" gets you on the road to nondiet thinking.

Phyllis, when on a diet, used to eat the raw cookie dough when she was making cookies because cookies, the finished product, were on her "illegal" list of foods. With her new way of thinking, she allows herself to have the cookies but often chooses not to, simply because she doesn't want them at the time. After all, she can have cookies later on if she wants. What a relief to no longer have that mind struggle with food!

If, after using these techniques for a while, you still

**When to Eat,
How Much
to Eat**

feel the urge to eat the entire box of cookies, you may still be partly in the diet thinking. You may feel you want the cookies, but still are getting mixed signals.

When confronting the urge to eat a particular food, practise your new skills in nonstressful situations so that you allow this powerful skill to work for you when you need it. Being preoccupied with confrontation does not allow it to happen naturally. To help it happen naturally, ask yourself “Do I really want it or do I think I want it because it’s there and I like it (partly out of a habit)? I know I can have it later on if I want it. And if it is no longer there, I can buy or make some more.”

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FEEL HUNGRY?

What does it mean to feel hungry? What does it mean to eat till you’re satisfied and not overly full? Once again observe nondieters and notice what they do to tune into their natural hunger signals.

To begin to eat normally and think as nondieters do who eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full:

Ask yourself, **“Am I eating because I really want it or because I feel it will no longer be there tomorrow?”** Eating “normally” for most dieters suggests being “off the diet.” They think they have to “pack it in” before going on a diet again. Tell yourself, “I don’t have to overeat. It will be there later on.”

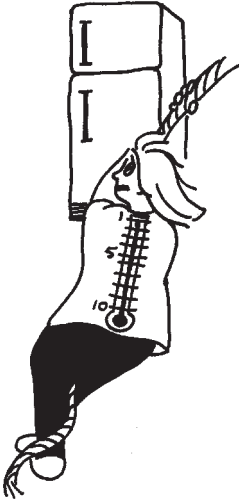
Ask yourself, **“Am I eating because it is there and I see it (automatic eating) or do I really want it?”** If you are not tasting and savoring your food and consciously eating it, then it is “wasted” calories. Tell yourself, “I want it only if I am physically hungry. If I eat for other reasons, I will not focus on my food while eating, tasting, and savoring my food without guilt. In this way, I will eat less food and ‘waist’ less calories.”

Ask yourself, **“If I eat a piece of cake because I want it, and I can’t stop at one piece, what is happening when I lose control?”** Perhaps you think you want the piece of cake simply because you haven’t eaten for a while and your blood sugar level is low (this means you are hungry). Tell yourself, “This is a normal reaction. I will eat when I am pleasantly hungry. Waiting until I am too hungry causes me to desire the quick sugar and to overeat on these foods.”

YOU COUNT,
CALORIES
DON'T

Eating regularly keeps you from bingeing because of insatiable hunger. Often people binge for a number of reasons, either because they have been deprived or they allow themselves to get too hungry.

Let's look at a scale of hunger as defined by HUGS™ that will help you to determine what it really means to feel physically hungry:



If your hunger level is under 5, you are consuming food as a fuel source and feeding your physical hunger. If you are above 5 you are dealing with the social pressure to eat. This psychological eating feeds the head rather than the body and you are no longer in control.

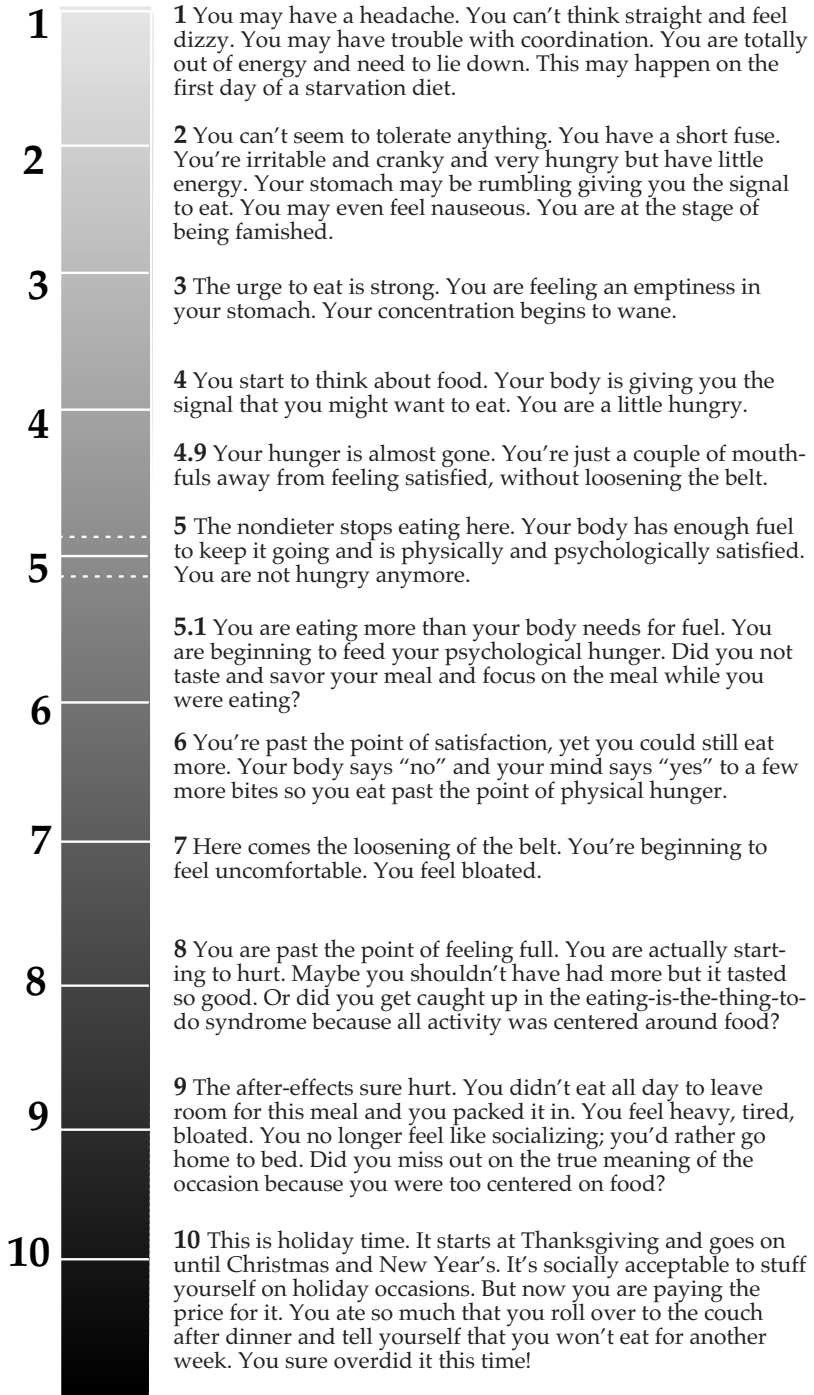
HUGS™ states that you do not want to let yourself get past number 3 on the scale (p159). At that point you no longer care what you are eating as long as you are fed. HUGS™ shows you how to eat to keep your blood sugar from the “hills” and “valleys” that can occur with improperly balanced eating habits. It shows you how to eat so that you can get more sustained energy from foods. It advocates the balance of carbohydrate and protein that allows the sugar to be released into your bloodstream at a more gradual rate. In this way, physical hunger will not overtake you so quickly. When you eat balanced meals (a balance between carbohydrate and protein), physical hunger will not set in for 3 to 6 hours after a meal.

One of my clients was a constant nibbler. She never gave herself a chance to get hungry. By allowing more time between eating, she discovered what it feels like to be hungry. On the other hand, if you diet below your weight set point (the point your body deems normal for you), you may always be hungry. It's your body's way of protecting you from going below your natural weight. The starvation way of losing weight seems to trigger the body to binge as a protective measure to bring the body weight back to normal or the set point. This method of starving and bingeing does not allow you to tune into your internal hunger signals. HUGS™ shows you how to eat in a normal way.

When psychological satisfaction = physical satisfaction, you are eating like a nondieter.

TIP: Before shopping for food, eat a snack if your meal will be delayed. Shopping when hungry can easily run up your bill on high-sugar, high-fat foods. These are particularly tempting when your blood sugar is low.

HUNGER LEVEL SCALE



HUGS

It's wondrous what a hug can do,
A hug can cheer you when you're blue.
A hug can say, "I love you so,"
or, "Gee! I hate to see you go."
A hug is, "Welcome back again!"
and, "Great to see you!" or
"Where've you been?"
A hug can soothe a small child's pain
And bring a rainbow after rain.

The hug! There's just no doubt about it,
We scarcely could survive without it.
A hug delights and warms and charms,
It must be why God gave us arms.

Hugs are great for fathers and mothers,
Sweet for sisters, swell for brothers,
and chances are some favorite aunts
love them more than potted plants.

Kittens crave them. Puppies love them.
Heads of state are not above them.
A hug can break the language barrier,
And make the dullest day seem merrier.

No need to fret about the store of 'em.
The more you give, the more there
are of 'em.
So stretch those arms without delay
and give someone a hug today.

Author Unknown