

Recovering from Disordered Eating

What Stage of Recovery Am I In?

Those working on recovery from disordered eating frequently feel ambivalent about letting go of symptoms, wondering how they will manage their food and weight and deal with feelings. Because of this ambivalence, it is common to vacillate between stages of recovery.

To get an idea of what stage you are in, complete the following checklist. The more checks in a category, the more likely you are in that stage. Consider discussing the results with a person you trust.

Precontemplation Stage

- I don't have a problem with my eating, exercise or methods of controlling my weight.
- Things are pretty much under control.
- I can stop restricting, binging and/or over exercising whenever I want.
- The way I eat is working for me.
- I have no complications from the way I eat, or if I do, they are minimal or unimportant.
- If someone expresses concern, I wonder what their problem is.
- I feel defensive and/or angry when people try to talk to me about these behaviors.
- The way I control my eating and/or exercise is critical to keeping my weight under control.

Contemplation Stage

- I think that the way I eat, exercise and/or control my weight may have negative consequences.
- Perhaps I need to change some of my behaviors, but really don't want to.
- I need to eat and /or exercise this way to manage my weight or it will get out of control.
- I often weigh the pros and cons of changing or not changing.
- Some days I have had enough and want nothing more than to stop my symptoms.
- Other days there is no way I'm going to give up the way I eat and/or manage my weight.
- I sense that the way I eat, exercise, and/or manage my weight is not working for me.
- I doubt that the so called long-term benefits of changing will outweigh the short-term costs.

Preparation Stage

- I am aware I have a serious problem.
- My symptoms have begun to feel severe, disruptive and/or costly.
- I think my behaviors may not be about controlling weight, but about deeper issues.
- I'm aware I need to change the way I eat, exercise and/or manage my weight to heal.
- I'm beginning to think I may have to let go of my intense need to look a certain way.
- I am gathering my resources and psyching myself up to do the hard work.
- I'm talking with those who understand recovery and/or reading more about eating problems and recovery, working to understand and explore alternatives.
- I'm not sure that I want to follow the recommendations from disordered eating experts.

Action Stage

- I am actively making efforts to change the way I eat, exercise and/or control my weight.
- I am willing to trust and rely on the expertise of others, such as my therapist or nutritionist.
- I believe I can heal and move beyond these problematic behaviors.
- I have almost completely quit restricting, binging, purging, over-exercising etc.
- I am using strategies to avoid acting on urges to restrict, binge, purge, abuse laxatives, over-exercise, etc.
- I am actively challenging and overcoming food fears.
- I am convinced that restricting food intake and/or over-exercising will cause the symptoms I am trying to heal.
- I know that focus on food, weight, etc., distracts me from the real, underlying problems.
- I regularly get support to understand and deal with these underlying issues.

Maintenance Stage

- I know I've made incredible progress and use that to motivate me to continue.
- I regularly practice alternative coping mechanisms.
- I plan ahead for stressful situations to prevent symptoms and make sure I have support.
- Healing eating and weight related struggles is worthwhile and meaningful to me.
- I am patient with myself and recognize that it often takes a while to let go of old behavior patterns and practice new ones until they are second nature.
- Sometimes I feel triggered to engage in old behaviors, but use support and stay on track.
- Every once in a while I mess up, but realize it is a learning opportunity and do not beat myself up.
- I understand that if urges or symptoms start to reemerge, it means I am off balance in my life and I look for where I am off balance and/or get support.

What Does the Maintenance Stage Look Like?

- I eat when hungry and quit when satisfied most of the time, without issue.
- I can tolerate fullness without it triggering restricting, binging or negative thinking.
- I rarely, if ever, get drawn in by discussions/advertising about body shaping.
- I do not use eating, exercise or focus on weight to escape from feelings, life, etc.
- I trust my body to know what I need to weigh and let my body manage my weight.
- I can eat pretty much all foods without any issues.
- I can go anywhere to eat and know I will be okay.
- I often feel a sense of freedom around food and weight that is absolutely amazing!

Full recovery from disordered eating is possible, with hard work and dedication. Do not give up -- you deserve a life free of disordered eating behaviors and to have a peaceful relationship with food and your body. Check back in several months and retake this quiz to see how you are doing.

And visit www.EatingWisdom.com for free handouts and our online course, **Intuitive Eating: How to Escape Diet Culture and Become an Empowered Eater.**