FINDING A

WAY OF EATING

THAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU

important

THE REFEEDING SYNDROME

In the very early stages of recovering from malnutrition, nutrition and hydration given too quickly can result in the Refeeding Syndrome. It can cause life-threatening complications due to electrolyte imbalances. In case you have been in recovery already for longer - you can either skip this chapter or solely read it out of interest.

WHAT IS IT?

When your body is not properly nourished, it has many mechanisms that allow it to overcompensate and to keep it´s homeostasis = keep you alive. It eventually gets used to overcompensating. That´s also the reasons, why people who are malnourished may have (near-) normal lab-test results.

So, when someone malnourished begins to receive nutrition and hydration again, especially more than they have been taking in for a long time, the body easily becomes overwhelmed.

WHO IS AT RISK?

The remainder of this module is directed towards those who are not at risk for Refeeding Syndrome. At risk are especially those, who have a BMI below 16, loss of 15% of your body weight within 3-6 months and/or a very low nutrient intake before starting the refeeding process.

SYMPTOMS

Electrolyte imbalances can affect the heart, brain, and other major organs and lead to serious complications. It usually occurs within the first few days. When you are experiencing a bunch of the following symptoms, please reach out for a professional treatment team immediately.

- anaemia, low blood pressure, elevated blood sugar

- Heart arrhythmia or increased heart rate

- fatigue, weakness, breathing difficulty, abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting

- bowel changes, swelling, muscle pain, paralysis, confusion, seizures, at risk of becoming comatose

Medical professionals will be able to monitor your electrolytes while slowly and steadily increasing your daily intake.

GENERAL GUIDELINE

for your eating structure, snacks and meal composition to heal extreme hunger, repair your body from the inside out and finally feel satisfied.

EAT YOUR BREAKFAST

Eat right after waking up and washing your face. We want our body to be perfectly prepared for the day and we don´t save up calories for later - as this just sets us up for an episode of eating past comfortable fullness and dissatisfaction.

3 MEALS & 2 SNACKS AT LEAST

That´s the minimum for someone recovering from an ed, dieting or any other kind of restriction. That way you can make sure to get enough nutrients in and most importantly: you´re relearning the structured eating again.

THE THREE HOUR RULE

Never go longer than 3 waking hours without food. This stabilises your blood sugar and makes sure you´re not "accidentally" getting overly hungry (Panic mode). Give yourself permission to eat again even 30min after a main meal. 3 hours is the MAXIMUM.

MACRO-NUTRIENT COMPOSITION

We eat them all: Carbs, fats, and protein. Caus´ the three together combined make a perfect filling and satisfying trio! But no worries! I am not going to make you track your macros or calories. Instead I want to introduce you to the plate by plate approach. (p.

FUN FOODS

With fun foods I mean those foods you probably label as "bad" foods. Introduce fear foods gradually over time until they are normal again. When you´re having extreme hunger it is super important to give yourself unconditional permission to eat.

NO COMPENSATORY BEHAVIOR

It is unrealistic to say, that you will stop purging over night when you are now doing it on a regular basis. But as I mentioned before: Purging behaviours trigger an increased need and desire for food and nutrients in general.

BACK TO STRUCTURED EATING

Food rules, calorie limits, fear foods, ... as well as under-eating often lead to a irregular and chaotic pattern of eating. This may take the form of delaying eating for as long as possible, saving up calories (for a possible binge), not having real meals, etc. This way of unstructured eating makes you more vulnerable to binge eating, so instituting a regular eating pattern is a crucial step in recovery.

WHAT IS STRUCTURED/REGULAR EATING?

Structured eating gives organisation to food and feeding through nourishing meals. For most people this includes three meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner and additional two to three snacks. This is such a crucial step in recovery as it trains the body to efficiently communicate it´s current needs to the brain. Even though this might seem like against intuitive eating at first, this will help you to be able to listen to your hunger and fullness cues later on in the process.

And most importantly: **Your body can let go of the panic mode and relax**. It learns, that the famine/starvation is over and trusts, that it will be fed properly. No need to overeat or binge.

HOW TO APPROACH IT

breakfast — **morning snack** — **lunch** — **afternoon snack** — **dinner** — **night snack**

These 3 meals and 2-3 snacks are just a guideline. Whenever you feel hungry inbetween, you should go for another snack. But that doesn´t justify to skip the next meal. And at each meal you should eat until feeling somehow full. It should not feel restricted. This may be a scary step, but I assure you that staying in your eating disorder for the rest of your life is even scarier. This discomfort is only temporary, you got this!

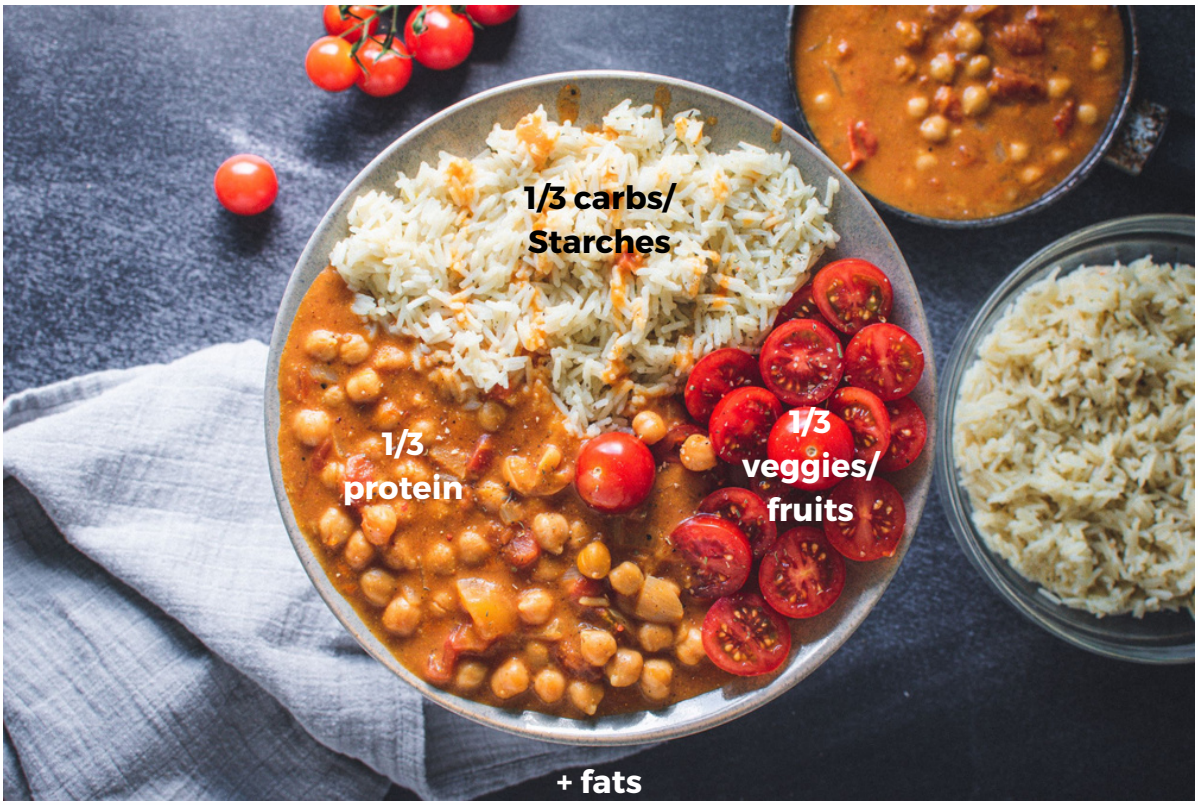
Stick to this structure even when you don´t feel hungry yet or you might have completely overdid it at a previous meal. This necessary, so your body can trust you again and you can also get used to eating regularly again. Over time the constant desire for food will decrease.

MEAL GUIDE

In general I am a HUUUGE promoter of honouring all your cravings. Because neglecting your cravings will only intensify them on the long term. But to rebalance your hormonal system, refill your nutrient storages, etc. your body also needs a lot of nutrients. And how we assemble meals also have a great impact on how satisfied or full we feel afterwards. So, in this chapter I want to show you can do both - honour your cravings and still get all essential nutrients. Because eating disorder recovery or recovering from dieting also means valuing your body for all it does - and one way to do so, is to nourish it properly without sacrificing your mental health.

If you haven´t checked out the membership-site on my blog yet - now may be the perfect time to do so. I am posting unrestricted, nourishing and satisfying meals. These recipes are inspired by the plate by plate approach, so the main goal of these recipes is having a balanced variety of food on your plate. You´re learning how a normal plate of food may look like rather than counting calories or weighing out your food portions. All you need is a plate with 10" Ø (25cm).

EXAMPLE



BE PREPARED

Nothing is more difficult than making a good food choice when you are already hungry or when the unfriendly voice in your head tells you to skip. Being prepared will help you to stick to your recovery and nourish your body properly. **Use this page to write down meals and snack ideas** - using the knowledge about how to create a satisfying and hunger crushing plate. Just food items, not food portions (f.e. greek yogurt, granola, berries, almond butter)

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH

AFTERNOON SNACK

DINNER

NIGHT SNACK

HYPERMETABOLISM

I often get asked "why can´t I just eat as much as everyone else around me?". The answer is, that individuals recovering from an restrictive eating disorder tend to require increasingly more energy to gain and maintain their weight. One reason is, that your body needs to heal all the inner damages, another one is hypermetabolism.

WHAT IS IT?

It is a relatively common condition in eating disorder recovery. As the name suggests, hypermetabolism is a state that causes the body to experience an abnormal increase in its basal metabolic rate. Simply put: your body burns more energy (than normal) while at complete rest. This lasts up to 3-6 months after weight restoration.

SYMPTOMS

- sweating especially night sweats
- increased hunger cues
- insomnia
- not gaining weight at a relative high calorie intake
- tiredness and fatigue

TREATMENT

This is remarkably simple. Give it a guess! Eat food. And a lot of it. Once your body is healed from the inside out, everything will get back into balance. Until then try to compare your food portions to others as little as possible.

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN

Your metabolism is adaptive, which means when you eat less, your metabolism slows down to save energy, when you eat more than needed, it speeds up. With other words: the metabolism is nothing you can break or damage. And it is supposed to keep your body at it´s individual homeostasis (= set point weight)

When someone after a period of limited food intake starts to eat significantly more again, they tend to be very energy inefficient. Which means they show a increased **diet-induced-thermogenesis** (a lot of energy coming from food is released as heat causing feeling hot, night sweats, etc.

Another reason why you might need more energy than other peers: In case of weight restoration - when you gain weight, your basal-energy-requirement increases, which means at the beginning you might be gaining weight at 1500 kcals, and as the time goes on you maintain your weight at 3000kcals.

A LETTER FROM YOUR RECOVERED SELF

Write a letter to yourself, 10 years from now. update yourself on the magnificent, fulfilling, eating disorder-free life. How is meal time different to now, what is it like to have a perfectly normal relationship with food? how is your social life and intimate relationships different, how does all of that make you feel? Try to let your imagination run wild. Whatever you´re dreaming up, it´s possible.

THE DISCOMFORT IS ONLY TEMPORARY!

YOUR BODY WANTS TO TRUST YOU AS MUCH AS YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO TRUST YOUR BODY.

RESTRICTING/ BINGEING PURGING WILL NOT BRING YOU THE HAPPINESS YOU ACTUALLY DESIRE ON THE LONG TERM.

NOT EVERY MEAL HAS TO OR CAN BE PERFECT

DIFFICULT DOES NOT MEAN IMPOSSIBLE

A HIGHER NUTRITIONAL INTAKE IS ASSOCIATED WITH A BETTER RECOVERY OUTCOME :)