Training my mind to eat good foods in moderation

Eating a poor diet can put us at increased risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension and poor mental health. Today we look at foods and mental health. What we eat can affect our mood and our mood can also influence what and how much we eat.

TRIGGERS FOR EATING

Sometimes we eat, not because we are hungry but because we are bored, stressed, lonely, unable to sleep, watching television or simply because we see food.

It is important to ask ourselves if we are really hungry and here’s a chart that may help.

Drinking plenty of water (6-8 glasses) a day, and more if you are very active or it is a hot day. Not drinking enough water can cause headaches, mood changes, no energy to get up and go, poor concentration and slower responses.

Foods that boost mental wellbeing

Some good mood-boosting foods

- **Sweet Potatoes** help to reduce period pain in women. They reduce depression and help to keep blood sugar levels steady and therefore help to prevent mood swings and sugar cravings.

- **Bananas** give a sustained energy boost and are packed with vitamins and potassium which reduces stress and reduces high blood pressure.

- **Leafy greens** such as **broccoli** are an excellent source of folic acid, a lack of which has been linked to a depressed mood.

- **Avocado Pear** contains good fats, and many vitamins and minerals good for mental health.

- **Oatmeal** is rich in soluble fibre which helps to smooth out blood sugar levels by slowing the absorption of sugar into the blood.

- **Peas** and **beans** can help fight depression. **Lentils** are a great food for vegetarians as they also contain protein.

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The mind is a powerful tool that can help us manage what and when we eat. Now that we have considered aspects of good and bad nutrition and here are tips to stop mindless eating adapted from HealthLine2.

1. Buy smaller packages
2. Use smaller plates and taller water glasses
3. Keep certain foods out of sight
4. Make it inconvenient to snack/reach foods
5. Eat slowly and savour the full feeling
6. Beware of erroneously labeled “health foods”
7. Don’t buy in bulk
8. Focus on food while eating. Avoid distractions like television and social media apps while eating

ACTIVITY ONE
Survey Time

A brief survey on whether you eat too much or too little when stressed - the importance of the mind in excess eating.

This Salzburg Stress Eating Survey and can be found here:

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When I am overwhelmed with things I have to do,</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>During periods of great stress,</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>When I feel things are out of control,</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>On days where everything seems to go wrong.</td>
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<td>While preparing for a strenuous task,</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>When I am under pressure,</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>When I feel nervous or stressed,</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>When I feel that I have no influence over the important things in my life,</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>When I feel that I am not really on top of things,</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>When I feel difficulties have been piling up so high that I cannot overcome them,</td>
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2. https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/13-tips-to-stop-mindless-eating#TOC_TITLE_HDR_2
ACTIVITY TWO

Food Diary

Keep a food diary for at least 3 days in one week - 2 weekdays and 1 day on the weekend. Attached to this handout is a form for you to write down all the foods you eat for one week. There is a space for every day of the week but you can choose 3 average days and write down all that you eat.

1. In patients living with diabetes, control of blood pressure and cholesterol is the most important thing to do to prevent early death.

2. Only 1 in 10 Jamaicans who have high blood pressure have their high blood pressure under control. Are you one of the 9/10 who are living with uncontrolled high blood pressure?