Improving Eating Behavior & Body Image

TI 023 - Thematic

By

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IMPROVING EATING BEHAVIOR AND BODY IMAGE  TI 023

A Structured Group Program for Repeat Dieters

and Others at Risk for an Eating Disorder

Reformatted by the Clearinghouse Fall 2003

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1986

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Session #1: Education and Overview

Handouts:

- Rationale for Eating Behavior Body Image Program
- Improving Eating Behavior and Body Image
- An Overview
- Expectancy Questionnaire
- Weekly Eating Behavior Diaries

I. Introduction to the Program.

A. Introductions: Exchange names and purposes for being in the group. Cover issues of confidentiality.

B. Elicit participants’ reasons for dieting. List on the board. (Will include things like “to lose weight,” “to make my stomach flat,” “to keep my hips narrow,” “because I’m fat,” “because I eat too much,” “I always want to be just 10 lbs. less than I am,” “I always diet before a big date,” “I diet because I feel happier when I’m thin,” “I diet because my mother always tells me I need to lose weight,” etc.).

II. Rationale.

Discuss repeat dieting as a risk factor in the development of bulimia. Describe the vicious cycle of dieting, the ineffectiveness of dieting, and the theory of biological set-point.

Discuss that this program will help women who repeatedly diet to learn better ways to maintain normal weight and good health. In addition, the program will heighten each woman’s awareness of the link between her feelings about herself and others and her eating behavior (e.g., hating herself when fat, needing to please others by being thin, etc.).

Go over the outline of the program. After going over the rationale, encourage members to give their reactions and comments. Discuss the reasons they gave for dieting in light of facts you have just presented. Prompt for feelings about the realities of dieting and women’s bodies. Stay with this discussion for the rest of the session if members are active.
III. Dieting Histories.

If time permits, try to develop group cohesion by encouraging women to describe their dieting histories and feelings about body size and weight.

Were they ever teased about their weight? Were they fat or skinny as a child? When and why did they diet for the first time?

Encourage members to talk to each other, not just to the leader. Link similar comments made by different members. Label the common feelings that underlie each person’s “story.”

Not everyone will talk, so try to draw out the quiet ones; but don’t push it if they resist. The conversation may be fairly superficial during this first meeting. That’s fine. Focus on commonalities and connections between members. The goal is to have members feel comfortable talking about themselves in the group, so don’t push for any major therapeutic insights at this point.

IV. Homework.

Explain the purpose of the eating behavior diaries and importance of doing them daily. Emphasize importance of attendance. Give the expectancy questionnaire.
Rationale for Eating Behavior Body Image Program

You have been chosen to participate in this program because on the screening questionnaire you completed in class you all indicated that you diet often. We are providing this program for you because recent research has found that repeat dieting has negative consequences and may be a risk factor in the development of potentially serious eating disorders, particularly bulimia (the “binge-purge” syndrome). Let me explain how dieting can be problematic.

Women are programmed to have a proportionately higher body fat composition than men—a sex difference that holds across races and cultures. Before puberty, girls have 10-15% more body fat than boys, but after puberty girls have almost twice as much fat as boys. This is because girls gain weight at puberty in the form of fat tissue and boys gain weight in the form of muscle and lean tissue. The difference in fat composition between the sexes increases dramatically, on the average, across the life span.

Individual differences in body build and weight are largely genetically determined. Metabolic rates, or the amount of energy required to maintain basic bodily functions, can vary widely from one individual to another and accounts in part for why two people can eat the same amount of food and one will gain weight and the other will not.

Research has established that, despite myths to contrary, many obese adults eat the same or less than normal weight individuals, although it does appear that obese individuals exercise ~ than normal weight individuals. These findings have given rise to the set-point theory which hypothesizes that animals and humans have a specific body weight that the organism is biologically “set” to defend. When body weight deviates from the set point, the organism experiences physiological and psychological changes that encourage movement back to the original weight. Some individuals may have extremely high or low set-points and therefore are obese or underweight for biological reasons. Most people, however, are set to maintain weight within what is considered to be a normal range. This “normal” range, however, may not be what an individual considers an “ideal” or desired range.

Contemporary society prescribes the tubular, lean, no-fat look, especially for women. This creates a frustrating paradox for many women who not genetically programmed to have a tubular shape or slight, lean build. On the one hand, women have society telling them to be thin, and on the other hand, their bodies are predisposing them to be heavier. In order to resolve this dilemma, society promotes dieting as the path to thinness. Before the age of
13.80% of girls report that they have already been on a weight loss diet, as compared to 10% of boys.

On the basis of studies investigating the physiological changes that occur as a result of dieting, many researchers now believe that dieting is not only an ineffective way to attain long-term weight loss but that it may, in fact, contribute to subsequent weight gain and binge eating. A substantial decrease in daily caloric intake will result in a reduced metabolic rate, which impedes weight loss. The suppression of metabolic rate caused by dieting is most pronounced when basal metabolic rate is low from the outset. Because women have lower metabolic rates than men, women are particularly likely to find that, despite their efforts, they cannot lose as much weight as they would like. Upon resuming normal caloric intake, a person’s metabolic rate does not rebound immediately to its original pace, and in fact, a longer period of dieting will prolong the time it takes for metabolic rate to regain its original level. In addition, research has found that dieting results in the body utilizing calories more efficiently and increasing the proportion of fat in body composition. Hence, dieting ultimately produces effects opposite to those intended.

Repeat dieting is now believed to be a risk factor in the development of bulimia for several reasons. Women who have engaged in repeated dieting attempts are least likely to be successful at achieving their target weights by dieting. These women may be more vulnerable to attempt other weight loss strategies, including purging. The research on the physiological and psychological effects of dieting suggests that the more restrictively a person diets, the more likely she is to crave foods (particularly foods that are not allowed on the diet) and to give in to these cravings eventually. It is very common for bulimics to report a period of restrictive dieting prior to developing the disorder. Almost all bulimics have been repeat dieters; however, not all repeat dieters develop bulimia.

The purpose of this program is to help you learn better ways than dieting to maintain normal weight and good health. The goal of this program is for you to give up dieting. We will help you replace dieting with healthy eating behaviors. In addition, we’ll help you become more accepting of your body shape and size and less vulnerable to societal presses to be something that is neither realistic nor healthy.

Review the following overview of the program here.
Improving Eating Behavior and Body Image

An Overview

Week 1: Education and Overview

Week 2: Eating as Coping: Changing Eating Behavior

Week 3: Eating as Coping: Changing Thought Patterns

Week 4: Self-esteem, Perfectionism, Depression

Week 5: Anger and Assertiveness

Week 6: Cultural Expectations of Thinness for Women

Week 7: Enhancing Body Image

Week 8: Wrap-up: Where You Are and Where You’re Going
**Expectancy Questionnaire**

Name: ______________________________       Date:________________

The counselor for your group will not have access to your responses on this questionnaire. She will give the sealed envelopes to your individual counselor, who will remove your name and place your code number on the questionnaire.

Instructions: Please circle the number below each question which best represents your present attitude or feeling. Please note that 1 is the LOW end of the scale and 10 is the HIGH end of the scale.

1. How confident are you now that this program will be helpful to you in overcoming your eating problem and improving your feelings about yourself and your body?

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2. How do you think this program will compare to your own attempts to overcome your eating problem and body image?

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3. How confident would you be in recommending this program to a friend who was having problems with eating and body image?

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4. How confident are you in the leader of your group?

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5. How motivated are you feeling now about carrying out this program?

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**Weekly Eating Behavior Diaries**

*Duplicate this diary for the weeks covered.*

Name:_______________________  Week No.______

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/Time</th>
<th>What I Ate</th>
<th>Feelings/ Thoughts Prior to Eating</th>
<th>Where I Ate</th>
<th>Diet Today?</th>
<th>Binge Today?</th>
</tr>
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Session #2: Eating as Coping: Changing Eating Behavior

Handouts:
- Fat Facts
- Metropolitan Life Insurance 1983 Height and Weight Table

I. Overview.

Review the basic goals of the group and the rationale for the program.

Have any new members introduce themselves and indicate their reasons for being in the group. Remind them of confidentiality.

II. Introduce today’s topic: “Changing Eating Behavior.”

Today is the only day where weight and calories will be discussed specifically. After today the focus will be more on internal factors that contribute to certain attitudes about ourselves as women and our bodies.

A. Fat Facts.

Give members the Fat Facts handout. Go over it with the group carefully. Spend plenty of time on each question, drawing out their reactions and opinions. Emphasize the importance of exercise and normal eating. Encourage a flexible view of weight management. Work with each member to determine what she considers to be her desired weight--challenge that weight if seems too low.

B. Changing the Act of Eating.

Basic psychology emphasizes that any situation, which is paired with eating for a long enough time, will eventually acquire the ability to elicit hunger or the desire to eat. One of the steps in learning to modify your eating behaviors is to change or rearrange your environment so that the learned associations do not have a chance to remind you of food.

Below is a list of several strategies, which are small but powerful ways to begin changing your eating behavior. These strategies are particularly relevant to women who feel they must restrain their eating to maintain a healthy weight. Rather then
dieting, these eating behaviors are more likely to be helpful in adopting a permanent healthy eating style.

1. Try to eat in one or two designated eating places only.

2. When you eat, only eat; no other activities, excepting socializing.

3. Remove serving dishes from the table, or move them away from you on the table.

4. Keep easy-to-eat snack foods out of the house, or if you must have them, store them where you won’t see them.

5. Slow down the act of eating. Put fork down between bites and enjoy your meal leisurely.

6. Make the eating experience pleasant. Even if you eat alone, set the table for yourself or put a flower or a candle on the table. Sit down to eat and relax while you’re eating.

III. Homework.

Encourage participants, beginning today, to stop dieting and begin eating enough food to maintain a healthy weight for their height and build.

Encourage them to begin exercising regularly.

Have members to continue with their eating diaries.
Fat Facts

What is a healthy weight for a person of my height and frame?

Use the attached table to find the range of weight that has been shown to be associated with lowest mortality for women of your height and frame. The weights include indoor clothing weighing about 3 lbs. The heights include 1 inch for heels.

How many calories can I eat and still maintain my weight?

First you need to determine your activity constant. Use this chart and formula:

12 = inactive or sedentary lifestyle.

13 = sedentary lifestyle supplemented with occasional activities such as low exertion sports.

14 = frequent participation in moderate exercise, such as daily jogging or calisthenics.

15 = almost always on the go, seldom sitting down or still for any period of time.

16 = the lifestyle of a dancer, construction worker, or professional athlete who engages in frequent strenuous exercise.

FORMULA: Multiply your current weight by your activity constant— that’s how many calories you can eat and not gain weight.

For example, if you weigh 110lb and your activity level is 12: 110 x 12 = 1320. So, you can eat 1320 calories a day and still maintain your weight of 112 pounds.

About how much food is that?

1320 calories = 1 egg, 1 English muffin with jam, orange juice, turkey sandwich with cheese and mayonnaise, potato chips, 4 oz. chicken, baked potato, salad, vegetable, apple.

How many calories can I eat and achieve my desired weight?

Multiply your desired weight by your activity constant to get the number of calories you may consume. If you consume approximately this number of calories you will lose weight until you reach your desired weight. In addition, you will be learning to adopt an eating
style that will maintain your desired weight. Remember, you must be realistic about your desired weight. Think in terms of a range, rather than an ideal number. If you set your goal unrealistically low, you will be ~dieting~ and you are likely to gain all the weight you lose back.

The caloric requirements for the body weight maintenance for the average American adult is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>22-35</th>
<th>35-55</th>
<th>55-75</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>2400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>1700</td>
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</table>

**What if I want to lose faster?**

Instead of cutting calories, we recommend increasing your activity level. Exercise will tone muscles, increase your strength and endurance, and improve cardiovascular functioning. In addition, with time it will increase your metabolic so that you burning calories faster. In addition, exercise breaks up boredom or the blues, emotional states that can lead to excessive eating. Increasing activity without increasing eating means you will weight faster. We recommend that you exercise regularly 3 times a week and eat normally (enough calories to maintain a normal weight range for your height), rather than diet or engage in a “crash” exercise program.

**How do I know if I’m getting slimmer?**

Use a variety of indicators, not just the scale! Are you feeling better? Do your clothes feel a little better? Do you feel stronger? Do you look firmer? Are the inches around your waist changing? Remember, your weight can fluctuate as a result of water retention, especially just before your period and midway through your cycle. Also, if you exercise regularly, your muscle mass will increase and fat may be reduced, but you may end up actually weighing more (although, you will look and feel firmer and slimmer).

**What foods should I eat and not eat to achieve my desired weight?**

There should be no forbidden foods when you’re not dieting. If you like sweets, include them in your diet. The key to normal eating is eating a variety of foods—a balanced diet. Try to include foods from all four groups: grains, dairy, meat, fruits and vegetables.
Changing the Act of Eating

1. Try to eat in one or two designated eating places only.

2. When you eat, only eat~ no other activities, excepting socializing. .

3. Remove serving dishes from the table, or move them away from you on the table.

4. Keep easy-to-eat snack foods out of the house, or if you must have them, store them where you won’t see them.

5. Slow down the act of eating. Put fork down between bites and enjoy your meal leisurely.

6. Make the eating experience pleasant. Even alone, set the table for yourself or put a flower or a candle on the table. Sit down to eat and relax while you’re eating.
### Metropolitan Life Insurance 1983 Height and Weight Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height Ft. In.</th>
<th>Small Frame</th>
<th>Medium Frame</th>
<th>Large Frame</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 10</td>
<td>102-111</td>
<td>109-121</td>
<td>118-131</td>
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<td>4 11</td>
<td>103-113</td>
<td>111-123</td>
<td>120-134</td>
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<td>5 0</td>
<td>104-115</td>
<td>113-126</td>
<td>122-137</td>
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<td>5 1</td>
<td>106-118</td>
<td>115-129</td>
<td>125-140</td>
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<td>108-121</td>
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<td>128-143</td>
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<td>121-135</td>
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<td>6 0</td>
<td>138-151</td>
<td>148-162</td>
<td>158-179</td>
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Session #3: Changing Thought Patterns

Handouts:

- Sample Sheet of Negative and Positive Thinking about Food and Weight
- Dysfunctional Thinking
- Weekly Eating Behavior Diaries

I. Review homework.

Ask participants how successful were they in resisting the urge to diet. What new eating behaviors did they try?

Briefly process previous week’s eating diaries. Pay attention to thoughts they say they had that either helped or hindered their efforts. Praise all efforts to adopt healthy eating behaviors and resist dieting. Trouble-shoot as needed.

II. Eating Diaries.

Go over the “Thought and Feelings Prior to Eating” column of the diaries. Help each woman identify the thoughts she has about food and eating.

She may indicate that negative thoughts come after eating; that’s fine, attend to the nature of the thoughts and feelings regarding food and body size.

Then describe the circular relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviors, shown on the Changing Thought Patterns handout. Review the Sample Sheet with Negative Thoughts and Appropriate Thoughts handout.

III. Dysfunctional Thinking.

Go over the types of dysfunctional thinking in the Dysfunctional Thinking handout that lead to dysfunctional behavior. Emphasize that these may seem simplistic, but explain that if participants will closely examine their own thinking patterns, they’ll see ways in which they too slip into dysfunctional thinking.

Discuss appropriate alternate coping responses.
IV. Coping Response.

Ask each woman to focus on one new coping response for the following week. Enlist the aid of group members in generating coping responses.

V. Homework.

Have them record the use of their new coping responses in their diaries this week.
Changing Thought Patterns

The diagram below shows the circular relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. If you change the way you think, you will feel better and behave in ways that lead to more positive outcomes.

1. Events:
Perceptions of events via your senses.

2. Thoughts:
You interpret these events through your power of reason.

3. Mood:
Your feelings are created by your thoughts, not the actual events.

5. How you behave will influence what events you subsequently encounter.

4. Behavior:
Given your thoughts and feelings, you behave accordingly.
### Sample Sheet of Negative and Positive Thinking about Food and Weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Thoughts</th>
<th>Positive Thoughts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“If I eat a candy it will instantly turn to fat.” (overgeneralizing)</td>
<td>“No one gets fat from one sweet.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“If I’m thin and beautiful then my boyfriend will want to be with me more.” (jumping to conclusions)</td>
<td>“My boyfriend will want to be with me more if I’m relaxed, happy, and not obsessed with my weight.”</td>
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<td>“You pig! You have no self control.” (inexact labeling)</td>
<td>“Don’t blow things out of proportion. I control myself too much. Everyone overeats from time to time.”</td>
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<td>“If I gain 1 lb. I’ll go on to gain 20 lbs.” (overgeneralizing)</td>
<td>“If I gain 1 lb., I gain 1 lb. Don’t turn it into a crisis. It’s natural for weight to fluctuate as much as 10 lbs.”</td>
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<td>“If I’m overweight, people won’t like me.” (overgeneralizing/jumping to conclusions)</td>
<td>“Only people who are insecure about their own weight choose their friends on the basis of body weight.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I hate myself when I’m fat.” (mental filtering)</td>
<td>“I like to maintain a normal, healthy weight range, but my self-esteem does rely on what the scale says. I refuse to worship the scale!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If I don’t diet constantly I look fat and ugly.” (overgeneralizing/inexact labeling)</td>
<td>“Don’t overgeneralize. I need to eat well to look well.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I can’t give up the desire to be beautiful like the models.” (mental filtering)</td>
<td>“You can do whatever you make up your mind to do. I am not a slave to magazine dogma.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I want to lose weight fast.” (mental filtering)</td>
<td>“I’ll gain the weight right back if I don’t change my eating habits.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dysfunctional Thinking

Which of these mental traps do you find yourself falling into?

1. **Jumping to Conclusions**: the process of jumping to a negative conclusion that is not justified by the facts of the situation. For example, assuming that people are thinking badly about you when there is little evidence to justify such a conclusion.

2. **Overgeneralizing**: the process of drawing conclusions about your abilities, your self-worth, or the likelihood of a negative event occurring on the basis a one or just a few negative experiences.

3. **Mental Filtering**: The process of focusing on a negative detail of a situation and dwelling on it exclusively while “filtering” out important other details, thus losing sight of the big picture. Sometimes this involves exaggerating problems or failures and minimizing abilities and successes.

4. **Inexact Labeling**: An extreme form of overgeneralization. It involves attaching an exaggerated negative label to a situation that does not accurately reflect the intensity of the situation.
**Weekly Eating Behavior Diaries**

*Duplicate this diary for each week recorded.*

Name: _______________________________       Week No. _____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/ Time</th>
<th>What I Ate</th>
<th>Feelings/Thoughts Prior to or After Eating</th>
<th>Alternate Coping Response</th>
<th>Diet Today?</th>
<th>Binge Today?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

---
Session 4: Self-Esteem, Perfectionist and Depression

Handouts:
- How Can I Nourish Myself?
- My Positive Qualities

I. Diaries.

Go over the diaries from last week. As participants what new coping strategies did they use. Reinforce any positive changes reported.

II. Perfectionism Exercise.

Place signs along the length of the room labeled as follows: “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

(Alternatively, you may wish to hand out copies of Burns’ Perfectionism Scale and ask members to circle where they stand on the scale for each item.)

Read each of the items from Burns’ perfectionism scale and have members move along the continuum in response to each item.

After each item, elicit some reasons for why members have positioned themselves as they have.

After the exercise process the experience briefly. Process questions might include:

1. Which statements do you think best represents how perfectionism is a problem for you?
2. Which statement was most difficult for you?
3. What did you learn about yourself?

Questions for Burns’ Perfectionism Scale

1. If I don’t set the highest standards for myself, I am likely to end up a second rate person.
2. People will probably think less of me if I make a mistake.
3. If I cannot do something well, there’s little point in doing it at all.
4. I should be upset when I make mistakes.

5. If I try hard enough, I should be able to excel at anything I attempt.

6. It is shameful for me to display weakness or foolish behavior.

7. I shouldn’t have to repeat the same mistake many times.

8. An average performance is bound to be unsatisfying to me.

9. Failing at something means I’m less of a person.

10. If I scold myself for failing to live up to my expectations, it will help me do better in the future.

III. Discuss the relationship between perfectionism, depression and self-esteem.

Indicate that research has shown that women with eating and body image problems tend to be more perfectionist and feel more depressed and unhappy with themselves in general.

This is not surprising because perfectionism is actually an attitude or set of beliefs that involve setting unrealistic and unattainable goals. (Remind them of how many set weight goals far below the level that has been shown to be associated with lower mortality rates for women of their height and frame.)

Remember from last week that how you think leads to how you feel (depressed when you don’t attain your unrealistic goals) and how you behave (how many of you eat when you’re depressed?).

Perfectionist thinking usually involves a series of “should thoughts,” like “I should be more organized.” “I should study harder.” “I should diet.”

Have the women make a group list of their favorite “I Should” statements.

Have them rapidly Generate a Good list. Then indicate that these “should” statements usually contain a grain of truth but are overgeneralizations.

For example, “I should be more organized is vague and hard to ever really attain—one can always be more organized!”

This statement might be made in response to needing to clean one’s desk.
A more realistic goal might be to “I would like to clean my desk within the next week.”

Likewise, every student “should” study more often, but it’s more realistic to say, “I will try to read a chapter in my history text each week so as not to get behind.”

**IV. Nourishing Ourselves without Food.**

Encourage the women to replace their “should” statements with more realistic goals and encourage them to give adequate attention to their “wants.” Many women are so busy “feeding” others that they don’t take care of themselves.

The only way many women nourish themselves is to literally overeat and they end up with the experience of “never getting enough of what they don’t really want!”

Discuss ways to nourish the self without food.

On the board have them generate a list of situations and relationships that make them feel good and what they can say or do to make themselves feel good.

*On the Board, write these categories:*

1. Situations that make me feel good. (reading, taking a bath, etc.)
2. Relationships that make me feel good. (boyfriend, roommate, good friends)
3. What do I say that make me feel good? (telling myself “I’m a good person,” “I’m intelligent”, etc.)

**V. Self-Esteem and Feedback Exercise.**

(If you don’t have time for this, assign this for homework).

Have each woman list 5 qualities she likes about herself (using the handout provided: My Positive Qualities). After she makes her list, have group members say to each other what they like about each other.
VI. Homework.

1. Stop food monitoring this week. Instead have the women complete the **How Can I Nourish Myself?** handout. Then get an attractive box and write each nourishing activity down on a small piece of paper, fold the paper and put it in the box. They are to go to the box and take out a piece of paper each time they feel down about themselves and are tempted to nourish themselves with food.

2. In addition, have each woman ask three people (one who knows her from school, one family member, and one friend) to tell her what they like about her and then have her record it.
Burns’ Perfectionism Scale

1. If I don’t set the highest standards for myself, I am likely to end up a second rate person.

   “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

2. People will probably think less of me if I make a mistake.

   “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

3. If I cannot do something well, there’s little point in doing it at all.

   “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

4. I should be upset when I make mistakes.

   “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

5. If I try hard enough, I should be able to excel at anything I attempt.

   “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

6. It is shameful for me to display weakness or foolish behavior.

   “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

7. I shouldn’t have to repeat the same mistake many times.

   “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

8. An average performance is bound to be unsatisfying to me.

   “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

9. Failing at something means I’m less of a person.

   “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

10. If I scold myself for failing to live up to my expectations, it will help me do better in the future.

    “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”
How Can I Nourish Myself?

1. What situations make me feel good? (Make sure you put fun things not “being prepared for class”)

2. Which relationships make me feel good? Why?

3. What do I say and do to make myself feel good?
My Positive Qualities

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

WHAT OTHERS LIKE ABOUT ME

Other Student(s):

Family member(s):

Friend(s)
Session 5: Anger and Assertiveness

Handouts:

- What is Assertiveness?
- Yes–No Exercise
- Anger Log

I. Review Homework.

Focus on positive feelings that accompanied self-nourishing behavior. Encourage group members to continue to concentrate on changing thought patterns and to continue to incorporate time and activities for themselves into their daily lives.

II. Assertiveness and Feelings.

Discuss with the group the following ideas about women and assertiveness. When people do not feel that their behavior can make an impact on others or a situation, they will ultimately experience a sense of powerlessness or ineffectiveness which can lead to feelings of anger, frustration, depression, or anxiety.

People feel good about themselves when they believe that they can engage in direct behavior which will bring them the things they desire and at the same time affect others in constructive ways.

In our culture women who act non-assertively—placing other’s needs above their own, waiting for others to take the initiative, withholding their own opinions in deference to other people—are generally viewed as engaging in desirable feminine behavior. This stereotype increases the likelihood that women will be nonassertive, and furthermore, that they themselves will believe that assertive behavior is somehow appropriate.

Ask the women in the group why they behave non-assertively at times. What are their fears? Tune in to the fear of appearing non-feminine, “bitchy,” aggressive. (For the time being do not make a distinction between assertiveness and aggressiveness, simply elicit their fears about being assertive).

Consequences of Non-assertive Behavior. Regardless of the reason why women act non-assertively, when they do so, they may lose a sense of their own identity. This may occur when a woman believes that she must avoid conflict at all costs, must always be understanding and never complain or be “bitchy,” and must never be demanding.
When these beliefs are so strong that they become unrealistic a woman may lose contact with herself and her own genuine, spontaneous feelings and desires. Being nonassertive even in only a few situations or with specific people is likely to lead to some loss of self-confidence and self-esteem and contribute to feelings of anger and powerlessness.

Ask the women what price they have paid for not being assertive. What do they lose when they behave non-assertively?

**III. Review the Relationship between Anger, Assertiveness, and Eating Behavior.**

Women with eating and body image problems appear to have particular difficulty expressing themselves directly or assertively. This seems to be especially true when a negative emotion is involved.

Frequently women will eat instead of focusing on what’s “eating them.” Anger appears to be one of the emotions that is difficult to express assertively. Our language has many expressions relating anger to eating behavior.

> We frequently hear people talk about “swallowing” our feelings or feeling “fed up.” Other expressions include: “I cant digest this,” “he makes puke,” “I ended up eating my words,” “swallowing my pride” and others.

It is especially difficult for women to express anger assertively because in this society it is still considered unfeminine for women to experience feelings of anger or resentment. Women often fear being viewed as hostile, “bitchy,” or aggressive if they express angry feelings.

**IV. Assertiveness Frequently Involves Exercising Our Basic Rights.**

Ask the women to make a list of their basic human rights. These might include the right to judge our own behavior, to make mistakes, to change our mind, to say “I don’t know,” or “I don’t understand,” to refuse requests without feeling guilty, to express our feelings, to have our own opinions, to express ourselves without hurting others.

Encourage women to think of as many things as they can that they feel they are basically entitled to.
V. What is assertiveness?

On the handout is a definition of assertiveness:

Behavior which enables a person to act in her own best interest, to stand UP for herself without undue anxiety, to express honest feelings comfortably, or to exercise personal rights without denying the rights of others.

Discuss with the group the components of this definition (see handout) and draw out examples of where members have felt unable to behave assertively.

VI. Differentiate between assertiveness, non-assertiveness (passivity), and aggressiveness (violating others rights).

Have members give examples of each.

“The Hidden Bargain.” A common tactic of nonassertive women is to resort to indirect manipulation, or “the hidden bargain.” In this type of manipulation, instead of directly asking for what she needs or wants, the woman assumes that if she gives up some of her rights by not being assertive, and acts in a way to please the other person, the other person is duty-bound to engage in a particular behavior that she wants.

An example might be instead of asking directly for a raise, a woman might work excessively hard in the expectation that her extra work will force her employer to increase her salary without her having to ask for it.

An indirect manipulation of this type most likely will be ineffective, and then the woman is left feeling angry.

VII. Personal Exploration.

Explore with the women various situations in their own lives where they have difficulties being assertive, particularly ones in which they feel anger or resentment.

Explore their fears of acting in their own best interest or expressing their honest feelings.

Challenge irrational thinking and validate rational thinking.

Help them distinguish between the two.

Discuss with them the reasons for being nonassertive.
Some will have trouble saying no because they are afraid to give up an image. Others are nonassertive to win approval and acceptance. Others want to avoid hurting someone’s feelings.

Focus on the price they pay (in terms of their own self-esteem and the feelings of anger they harbor) for not behaving assertively. Encourage them to challenge their own reasons for being nonassertive and to allow themselves to say “no” without feeling guilty.

VIII. Homework.

1. Have them complete the Yes–No exercise on the attached handout.

2. Have them record situations this week that made them angry and how they handled these situations.
What is Assertiveness?

Behavior which enables a person to act in her own best interest, to stand UP for herself without undue anxiety, to express honest feelings comfortably, or to exercise personal rights without denying the rights of others.

1. To act in one’s own best interest: the capacity to make life decisions, to take the initiative, to trust one’s own judgment, to set goals and work toward them, to ask for help from others, to comfortably participate socially.

2. To stand UP for oneself: behaviors such as saying no, setting limits on ones time and energy, responding to criticism or put downs or anger, expressing or supporting or defending one’s opinion.

3. To express honest feelings comfortably: the ability to disagree, to show anger, to show affection or friendship, to admit fear or anxiety, to express agreement or support, to be spontaneous, all without painful anxiety.

4. To exercise personal rights: relates to one’s ability to express opinions, to work for change, to respond to violations of one’s own rights or the rights of others.

5. To not deny the rights of others to accomplish the above personal expression without unfair criticism of others, without hurtful behavior toward others, without name-calling, without intimidation, without manipulation, without controlling others.
Yes–No Exercise

Instructions: Say “no” to three things that you don’t want to do but feel you should do. This can be to someone else or to yourself. Say “yes” to three things that you really want to do but would not usually let yourself do or have or ask others for. Record these below.

NOs

1.

2.

3.

YESs

1.

2.

3.
**Anger Log**

Note situations this week in which you felt angry and how you handled them. Record these. How did you feel you handled them? What changes do you need to make? What changes did you make?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations that made me angry</th>
<th>How I handled them</th>
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</table>
Session 6: Cultural Expectations of Thinness for Women

Handout:

Homework: Magazine Pictures

I. Review homework.

Ask participants what did they say yes and no to? How did they handle angry situations?

Troubleshoot as necessary. Praise all positive changes.

II. Societal Pressures.

Briefly discuss how societal pressures for thinness for women promote dieting to unhealthy extremes—Bring in magazines ads, note TV ads, point out fashion and social trends. Point out how fashion trends change and how in times gone by, a heavier look was more fashionable.

III. The “Perfect Woman.”

Ask women to list the qualities of the “perfect woman” and write those on the board. What does she look like? Have them get specific—Tall, thin, muscular, looks healthy, strong, perfect skin, young, no hair on legs, perfect features, teeth, etc.

Now, ask them to list the advantages and disadvantages of trying to live up to the superwoman image they have depicted on the board. Advantages might be attention from men, feelings of confidence, admiration from others, etc.

What are the disadvantages of trying to live up to this image? How do they abuse their bodies trying to achieve an image? They might list health, ability to have fun, their emotions, their identity, their friendships, and their time as all suffering from their attempts to be a superwoman.

Point out that looking good is important; it’s excessive time and effort that that makes it self-defeating.
IV. Behavior List Activity.

In order to explore how societal expectations to be perfect women extend to how they relate to men, have the women generate a list of how they behave when they are around other women and when they are around men whom they find attractive.

Do they feel more uptight around men? More on guard? Does their behavior reflect their views of men as evaluators and of themselves as products to be evaluated?

Do they want to change any of those behaviors? Encourage them to think of experimenting with new behaviors around men—relaxing and being themselves.

V. Homework.

1. Have each member ask three men to identify three women they consider sexy and why and record their reactions to those reasons. Pass out the Magazine Pictures handout.

2. Have the women find a magazine photo of someone whose body they think looks like theirs and one of someone whose body they wish to look like and bring these to the next session.
**Homework: Magazine Pictures**

1. Find a magazine photo of someone whose body you think looks like yours and one of someone whose body you wish to look like and bring these to the next session.

2. Ask three men to tell you which women they consider sexy and why. Ask them to pick women you know or point to someone (movie stars and models excluded). Record your reactions to what they say.

Are you surprised by what you hear? Why? This exercise is designed to help you become aware of what others consider sexy and attractive. Many women are surprised to discover that fairly average looking women who do not fit the perfect woman image are considered sexy or attractive by men. They are also surprised to find out that factors other than weight are mentioned in defining a person’s attractiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is sexy and attractive?</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>My Reactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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</table>
Session 7: Enhancing Body Image

Handout: Homework: Attractive Attributes

Note: A mirror in the room will be needed for this session.

I. Mirror Exercise.

Before reviewing homework this week, introduce a mirror exercise that will start this week’s focus on body image on a positive note.

Have the group break into triads, groups of three. Instruct the groups to take turns standing in front of the mirror. When standing in front of the mirror each woman will begin at the top of her body and move down commenting only on what she likes about her body. She should try to comment on almost every part—hair, eyes, nose, mouth, skin, neck, chest/breasts, arms, hands, waist, hips, thighs, calves, ankles, feet. You may wish to list these parts on the board.

The other women in the triad should also add positive aspects of the woman’s body in the mirror. Remind the women that they must stick to positives and not include qualifiers (e.g., I like my smile, as long as my teeth don’t show)—the others in the triad are instructed to keep each other focused on positives.

Remind them that a body doesn’t have to be perfect to be appreciated, valued, and liked. Even if there are imperfections, participants are to indicate some appreciation for every part of their body even if it is only for its function or use. The goal of the exercise is for every woman to own her body—as it is.

II. Process the Exercise in the Whole Group.

Ask participants how did it feel to focus on appreciating your body—with all its imperfections? What was hard about the exercise? How did you feel to have others comment positively about your body? Did you believe what your partners told you?

Engage the group in a brief discussion on what will be lost if they like their bodies? What will they give up if they stop hating their bodies? What does their body-disparagement do for them? (They’ll have trouble with this at first until you get them started.)
For many, body-disparagement motivates them to diet. If they like their bodies they won’t be as motivated to diet! If they stop dieting they’ll stop pursuing “ultra-thinness.” And if they give up the pursuit of thinness, what will they lose? Power. For many women thinness = power.

If they give up this method of gaining power, then they have to learn other ways of achieving interpersonal power and effectiveness—assertiveness skills, self-nurturing skills, etc.

Note: You will need to “pull” these notions from the group instead of “laying” these ideas on them. A good analogy for these points, is when we learn to walk we also give something up—we aren’t carried anymore (or as much). When we learn to read we aren’t read to anymore (or as much). Becoming a self-sufficient, mature adult has its price tag!

III. Correction Distortions in Body Image.

Becoming comfortable with one’s body means learning to see it realistically. Have the women show the group the pictures of what they thought they look like and what they want to look like. (If they forgot their pictures, take five minutes and have each woman draw a “real” and “ideal” depiction of her body).

Is there any distortion in how they see themselves? Do thin women think they look like overweight women? Do they aspire to look like someone who has a completely different body shape or size? Do they actually look like their ideal?

Encourage the women to give honest feedback to each other on the distortions they see in the “real” and “ideal” photos.

Discuss some of the common cognitive distortions around body image. What would they be like if they looked like their ideal? Successful, popular, happy, worthwhile?

Examine the other attributes that they believe are associated with body image. Help them think more realistically about what body shape and size really means—A “perfect” body does not guarantee happiness!

Tie together ideas discussed in many of the previous sessions, especially the session on cultural expectations to be thin.
IV. Showing that Factors Other Than Weight Constitute Attractiveness.

Not all women distort, of course, and some women are overweight by most objective standards. Is being thin the only way to be attractive, especially to them? Ask the women what the men they talked to last week said they considered sexy and attractive in women. Write these on the board.

Point out the attributes besides weight and body shape that are considered attractive. Don’t allow a digression into all how men want a thin, gorgeous woman—some men do, but not all men—that’s an overgeneralization.

Behavioral and personality characteristics are often mentioned by men with even more frequency than physical characteristics. Discuss with the group the time and effort that could go in to developing themselves that has been spent on physical appearance.

V. Homework.

1. Pass out the homework handout. Ask participants to write down things they like about their appearance, what others like about their appearance, and their “attractive behaviors”—attractiveness aside from physical appearance.

2. Tell participants to pick something from the “attractive behaviors” list and focus on enhancing and improving that aspect. If they have a nice smile—make a conscious effort to smile more often (but be genuine!). The idea is to tune in to how they behave, rather than how they look.

3. Then ask them to make one change in their appearance, besides trying to lose weight, that will enhance how they feel about themselves.

For example: If you wear too much make-up—wear less; if you never wear make-up you might want to try just a bit; if you wait to buy clothes until you’re thin—buy something NOW; if you spend a lot of time managing your hair—get a cut that requires less time; if you wear dark colors that “make you look thin”—try something bright!
Homework: Attractive Attributes

1. Using the form below, write down things you like about your appearance, what others like about your appearance, and your “attractive behaviors”—attractiveness aside from physical appearance.

2. Pick something from the “attractive behaviors” list and focus on enhancing and improving that aspect. If you have a nice smile—make a conscious effort smile more often (but be genuine!) The idea is to tune in to how you behave, rather than how you look.

3. Make one change in your appearance, besides trying to lose weight, that will enhance how you feel about yourself. If you wear too much make-up—wear less; if you never wear make-up you might want to try just a bit; if you wait to buy clothes until you’re thin—buy something NOW; if you spend a lot of time managing your hair—get a cut that requires less time; if you wear dark colors that “make you look thin”—try something bright!

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT MY APPEARANCE
WHAT OTHERS LIKE ABOUT MY APPEARANCE

MY ATTRACTIVE BEHAVIORS
Session 8: Where You Are Now And Where You Go From Here

I. Where you are now.

If you notice any visible change in the group members’ appearance—a new hairstyle, less make up or use of some make-up—make positive comments. Review what changes they made in attractive behaviors and reinforce the notion that other factors beside weight constitute attractiveness and receive attention from others.

Point out that this is the last session and that the focus will be on reviewing each woman’s progress and what she will continue to work on after she leaves the group.

II. What effect has the group had?

Ask each woman to briefly state what she has found most valuable about the group and one important thing she has learned about herself. Encourage each person to be specific—what’s really going to stick with her from this experience? You may wish to have others comment on what they have observed to be positive changes in each other as well.

III. What do I do in the future?

Go around the group again, this time having each woman complete the following sentence stem:

“The one thing I want to continue to work on when I learn this group is...”

Finally, go around the group and have woman choose two other women in the group and complete the following sentence stem: “My hope for you in the future is...”

IV. Closing Comments.

Make any closing comments that will pull together the themes that arise in the above exercises. Wish them lots of luck!

Encourage them to take the rest of the semester to consolidate what they have learned in this group, and if they decide they would like additional help with eating or body image problems (or any personal problem) the counseling center is available to all students. It runs many groups (many are co-ed) and there are counselors and psychologists available for one-to-one counseling.
V. Post-Test and Follow Up.

GIVE THEM A REMINDER SLIP FOR THE POST-TEST AND FOLLOW UP TESTING SESSIONS.

Evaluation Form. Have them complete the evaluation form and return it to you in a sealed envelope.
Evaluation Questionnaire

Name:____________________________________________  Date:_______________

The counselor for your group will not have access to your responses on this questionnaire. She will give the sealed envelopes to your counselor, who will remove your name and place your code number on the questionnaire.

Part I

Instructions. Please circle the number below each question that best represents your present attitude or feeling. Please note that 1 is the LOW end of the scale and 10 is the HIGH end of the scale.

1. How helpful was this program to you in overcoming your eating problem and improving your feelings about yourself and your body?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Not at All  somewhat  very

2. How do you think this program compared to your own attempts to overcome your eating problem and body image?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Not at All  somewhat  very

3. How confident would you be in recommending this program to a friend who was having problems with eating and body image?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Not at All  somewhat  very

4. How helpful was the leader of your group?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Not at All  somewhat  very
5. How motivated were you to carry out instructions in the program?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at All somewhat very

Part II

1. What changes have occurred in your eating habits since you started the group?

2. What other changes have you noticed in yourself since beginning the group?

3. Please indicate whether there has been in increase, decrease, or no change in the following behaviors since you started the group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DECREASE</th>
<th>NO CHANGE</th>
<th>INCREASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Dieting</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Eating three meals a day</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Weighing self daily</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Exercising regularly</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Changing negative thought patterns</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
f. Doing things to “nourish” myself

g. Saying no when I mean no

h. Expressing my feelings more honestly

i. Resisting social pressures to be a “perfect woman”

j. Appreciating my body as it is

4. On the whole, how often did you complete the “homework assignments” between sessions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Every Single Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part III**

1. What aspects of the group did you find most valuable?

2. What aspects of the group did you find least valuable?
3. What topics would you have liked to have seen added to the group?

4. What suggestions would you have for future groups?

5. What kind of additional help do you think you’ll need after this group?

6. Additional comments:
Group Outcomes

Evaluation questionnaires were given to two groups, each comprised of eight members, one week following the completion of the group program. In addition to questions asking for participants’ subjective reaction to the group, ten specific behaviors, targeted for change by the program, were listed. Participants were asked to indicate whether there had been an increase, no change, or decrease in each of these behaviors. One major goal of the program was for participants to replace dieting with healthier eating behaviors and regular exercise. In response to whether there had been a change in dieting, 14 (87.5%) participants indicated a decrease in dieting as compared to 2 (12.5%) who indicated no change. Eleven (68.8%) participants indicated that they were exercising regularly compared to 5 (31.3%) who indicated no change. It should be noted that those who indicated “no change” in response to the exercise item may have already been exercising regularly when they started the program.

A second major goal of the program was to improve body esteem by encouraging self-acceptance and resistance to societal expectations for thinness. Thirteen of the participants (81.3%) indicated an increase in “appreciating my body as it is” compared to 3 (18.8%) who indicated no change. Fourteen participants (87.5%) indicated an increase in “resisting pressures to be perfect” compared to one (6.3%) who indicated no change and one (6.3%) who indicated a decrease in this behavior.

Positive behavioral changes were also found regarding assertiveness and changing negative thought patterns. Thirteen participants (81.3%) indicated an increase in “saying no when I mean no” and “expressing my feelings more honestly,” compared to 3 (18.8%) who indicated no change in either of these behaviors. Twelve (80%) participants indicated an increase in “changing negative thoughts” and 3 (20%) indicated decreasing this behavior.

Behaviors which did not appear to change included two specific habits regarding food and weight. Twelve participants (75%) indicated there was no change regarding “eating three meals a day” compared to 2 (12.5%) who said they increased and 2 (12.5%) who said they decreased this behavior. Six participants (37.5%) indicated they decreased “weighing self daily,” 9 (56.3%) indicated no change, and one (6.3%) indicated an increase in this behavior. It was hoped that participants would increase “eating three meals a day” and decrease “weighing self daily.” These findings would suggest that to reach these goals the program will need to emphasize the importance of these changes more strongly.

These results are summarized in Table 1.
### Table 1: Group Outcomes

N=16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dieting</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(87.5%)</td>
<td>(12.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Exercising regularly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(31.3%)</td>
<td>(68.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Appreciating my body as it is</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18.8%)</td>
<td>(81.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Resisting pressures to be perfect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.3%)</td>
<td>(6.3%)</td>
<td>(87.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Saying no when I mean no</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18.8%)</td>
<td>(81.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Expressing my feelings more honestly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18.8%)</td>
<td>(81.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Changing negative thought patterns</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(80.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Eating three meals a day</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12.5%)</td>
<td>(75.0%)</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Weighing self daily</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(37.5%)</td>
<td>(56.3%)</td>
<td>(6.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>