

QUICK THERAPY SOLUTIONS PROVIDED BY COUNSELLING IN FRANCE

OVEREATING

This package comprises:

1. Introduction
2. Worksheet 1 Food Diary
3. Worksheet 2 Expressing yourself
4. Worksheet 3 Relaxation and visualisation exercises
5. Worksheet 4 Grounding techniques
6. Questionnaire

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ED2: OVEREATING

INTRODUCTION

***Are you finding it difficult to eat enough and losing weight?
Or are you eating a large amount and then vomiting secretly?
Do you want it to change but don't know where to start?***

Those who over-eat feel out of control and often feel that they have an addiction to food. People who describe themselves as compulsive eaters end up eating very much more than they need every day which means that they will put on weight and feel that they must hide their food addiction from others' judgement, so eat secretly. Those suffering from the need to over-eat feel that they have uncontrollable cravings for food.

Some of the following may describe symptoms described by sufferers:

- ◇ Guilt after eating
- ◇ Eating food at top speed
- ◇ Eating in secret
- ◇ Not tasting or savouring food
- ◇ Eating when not hungry or when feeling full
- ◇ Feeling that you are out of control with food
- ◇ Feelings of disgust and self-hatred after over-eating
- ◇ Sufferers feel they will never be satisfied, even when totally over-full

The aim of this Quick Therapy Solution is to help you to have a positive relationship with food. Your aims would be:

- ◇ Being able to eat normally in front of others
- ◇ Feeling happier within yourself and about yourself
- ◇ Being able to say 'no' when you are offered food you don't really want
- ◇ Improving relationships
- ◇ Feeling healthy and fit
- ◇ Understanding what makes you over-eat

Please continue with the four worksheets that you have also printed from the package. These are designed to be completed at your own pace and, ideally, never more than one a day. The reason for this is that the worksheets are designed to help you process what is going on for you and you need time to think and work on the issues that the worksheets may bring up for you. Everyone is different and it is up to you what pace you set yourself. The control is always yours.

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WORKSHEET 3

FOOD DIARY

This is for your eyes only. This is important as you need to be as truthful as you can be, which is much easier when it's just you who will see this. Don't count calories, this food diary is just so that you can see whether there is a pattern to your eating and whether there is a link to your mood and events during the day.

Week	Breakfast	Lunch	Evening meal	Snacks	How do you feel at the end of the day? Describe your feelings
MONDAY How do you feel today?					
TUESDAY How do you feel today?					
WEDNESDAY How do you feel today?					
THURSDAY How do you feel today?					
FRIDAY How do you feel today?					
SATURDAY How do you feel today?					
SUNDAY How do you feel today?					

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Worksheet 2

Learning to express yourself

If you are experiencing disordered eating of any kind, whether it be under- or over-eating, the reasons are probably known to you but may be hidden or subconscious and difficult to uncover.

Keeping a "Thoughts and Feelings Diary" will help you to express your feelings and get them out of you and expressed onto paper.

Eating disorders can seem to be just about weight and food but these are just symptoms of feelings and what is happening in your life. Feelings such as low self worth, depression, sadness, anger, confusion, frustration, fear and insecurities, as well as issues like low self-esteem, dysfunctional relationships, perfectionism, and isolation are just some examples.

In order to start to understand why you are experiencing problems with eating, you need to be willing to explore, understand and accept what those issues are and with help begin to heal from the pain and or anger.

You will need to learn to express and talk about what you feel, even if it is just onto paper and to address what your issues may be. You will need to learn to identify your own negative emotions and what triggers negative thinking, and keeping a diary can help you to identify and cope with the stress in your life and the emotions that you feel.

The food diary that you have completed will show what the patterns are to your eating and some of the triggers. Using the food diary, once you have completed it, write down what you may have discovered. If you cannot see any patterns, it may be more appropriate for you to see a counsellor or other therapy professional to help you identify the issues.

The pattern is the sequence of events that lead from one thing to another i.e. something happens that makes you feel a certain way and this makes you then behave in a certain way.

Try to answer some of these from what you have learned:

◆ What are the triggers you may have identified in your food diary that may cause you to over-eat?

◆ What are the feelings most obvious to you when you over-eat? List them here:

◆ Do you see a pattern? If so, what is it?

◆ Have you discovered a way to distract yourself? If so what is it?

Use the next two worksheets as a way of helping yourself relax or distract you from repeating destructive eating patterns. Start a Thoughts and Feelings diary.

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VISUALISATION & RELAXATION

The visualisation is an extra tool to help you escape from stress and the relaxation is something you might find useful to learn to relax properly if visualising doesn't do anything for you.

It is important that you prepare yourself in advance for both visualisation and relaxation. Make sure that you allow half an hour in a quiet room or outside in the open where you will not feel rushed or worried, where no-one will interrupt you and where you can close your eyes and know that you will not be disturbed.

VISUALISATION

Make yourself comfortable and relax your body completely. Close your eyes and clear your mind of clutter until you can just see whiteness and your breathing is quiet and even. When you feel calm and relaxed, imagine that you are standing in a wood. It is warm and you are wearing light clothes. You can feel the warmth of the sun streaming through the canopy of trees above you. You can hear the birdsong and other soundstake a deep breath and savour the smells.

Now become aware of a clearing ahead of you and walk through the wood towards it. As you walk towards the clearing you can see that there is a thick hedgerow ahead of you on the other side of the clearing with a small gate in it. You are out of the wood now and you cross the clearing towards the gate. Open the gate and walk through it and you will find that you are on the edge of a large field. The grass is short and there are wild flowers and butterflies. The ground is warm so take off your shoes. Be aware of the feeling that being here gives you. You feel really happy and at peace. You feel really strong and well. There is something in the distance, on the other side of the field.

If you want to, you can go and see what it is. If you'd rather not, do whatever you feel like doing. There's a wooden seat on the edge of the field by the gate and I'm going to sit and wait for you here. When I call you, I'd like you to wander back towards the seat where I'm waiting for you. You can come to this place by yourself at any time. You could come back at night, early in the morning or at dusk, at any time.

Come back when you feel the need for a quiet, happy place to escape to. It belongs to you.

RELAXATION

Lie on your bed, on the floor or sit in a very comfortable chair. Start with your feet...concentrate on them and use your imagination to convince yourself that your feet are growing heavier and heavier. Feel your toes relaxing and getting heavy. Make the heavy feeling slowly creep up your legs...from your ankles up to your calves...to your knees...to your thighs...up and around your hips. When you feel that they are really heavy, make yourself fully aware of the heavy sensation.

Now do exactly the same thing with your hands. Relax them completely. Imagine that your fingers and hands feel really heavy. Make the heavy feeling creep up from your hands to your wrists...creeping up to your elbows...to your upper arms. You can really feel the weight of them. Allow the heavy feeling to spread up to your shoulders...your shoulders slump with the weight.

Now make your body feel really, really heavy. Try to be aware of your muscles relaxing. Feel the heaviness creep up into your jaw and let it come open a little with the weight. Feel it in your cheekbones...around your eyes...feel the heaviness in your forehead...feel that your eyelids are too heavy to open. Your head is too heavy for your neck to support.

Once you feel the heaviness overwhelm your body from the soles of your feet up to the top of your head and that your whole body is relaxed, concentrate on slowing your breathing so that it is deep and even. Stay like this for a while. When you're ready, gradually open your eyes, take in a calm, deep breath and come back to normal.

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GROUNDING TECHNIQUES FOR ANXIETY WORKSHEET 4

This worksheet is designed to help you learn some techniques to distract yourself. They are a way to help you stop behaviours that are unhelpful to you and although it sounds simplistic to say 'just stop thinking about it', it can often be easier than you think to learn how to distract yourself.

Use these when you are feeling anxious and out of control. When you find one that works, put it on your list.

AWARENESS TECHNIQUE

Sit on a chair, relax and close your eyes. Breathe quietly and slowly. Fold your hands in your lap and place your feet together side by side on the floor. Become aware of your body – be aware of the chair beneath you, on your bottom and your back, where you can feel the strongest pressure against your skin. Be aware of your hands and your nails, your wrists, your ankles touching each other. What can you hear? What thoughts are in your head? Think of blue. Now put an object in the blue. Drift your thoughts around this object sitting in the blue space and allow your mind to create pleasing images in this space. Relax and breathe. When you feel totally relaxed, open your eyes and take a few minutes to come back to yourself.

DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES

- Breathe slowly and steadily from your core. Imagine letting fear and worry go, evaporating along with each breath.
- If you are feeling 'stuck', change how you're positioned. Wiggle your fingers, tap your feet. Pay attention to the movement: you are in control of what your body is doing, right here and now.
- Meditate, if that's OK for you. Otherwise use distractions like television or music to help settle down.
- Use your voice. Say your name or pick up a book and read the first paragraph you find out loud.
- Look at yourself in the mirror. Smile, even if that's the last thing you feel like! How does that feel? What can you see? (If negative thoughts come to mind, write them down to look at later but let them go for now. You're anxious enough as it is.)
- Write out what's going on. Keep writing until you start to notice it makes a difference, lets some of the things you're anxious about out.
- Take a shower/bath. Notice the sensations of the water.
- Write an email to or phone somebody you care about.
- Take a look outside. Count the number of trees and street signs.
- Exercise. Jump up and down on the spot. Try some gentle yoga, go for a walk or ride a bike.
- Hold onto something comforting. Maybe a blanket or an old stuffed toy.
- Laugh, even if that's hard. Just the act of laughing about something, anything can break that spinning out of control feeling.
- When you're not too stressed, make a list of the things that provoke your anxiety.
- If you get PTSD flashbacks, when you're feeling OK, make a list of the furniture in your home and what room it's in.
- List 5 really positive things in your life. Put the list where you'll see it and remember that there's more to the world than just panic and fear.
- Think about the last week. Was there a day you didn't have so much anxiety? Remember how it felt to be less anxious than you are right now. What was different? What can change?
- Once you've found which techniques help, make a list to put on your wall, or carry in your pocket.

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ED2

Questionnaire

For your information, to help you understand yourself and to help you identify triggers

1. How does normal eating make you feel?

2. How does over-eating make you feel?

3. Do you ever feel that there is a big hole inside you that you are trying to fill?

4. Does over-eating make you feel safe? If so, from what?

5. What do you think about women who are overweight?

6. What do you think about men who are overweight?

7. Who in your birth family was over-weight?

8. List some "parental messages" you can remember being said about overweight people when you were little:

9. . List some "parental messages" you can remember being said about underweight people when you were little:

10. What negative statements do you imagine that your immediate family and/or friends might say about you behind your back:

a)

b)

c)

11. What positive statements do you imagine that your immediate family and/or friends might say about you behind your back:

a)

b)

c)

12. What would change if you lost weight and were able to control your intake food?

13. Would you like yourself more if you lost weight?

14. What is your layer of "fat" protecting you against?

15. Question 3 asked if there was a big hole inside you that you were trying to fill with food. If you answered yes, try to write down what is missing that food is trying to replace.

16. Say up to ten things about you that make you feel good about yourself (personal qualities, not looks)

17. If you could change your life today and walk into another life, who would you take with you and what would you change about your life now?

Thankyou for completing this questionnaire. Hopefully, it will show you some things that were hidden or subconscious and which are now down in black and white for you to see.