

Multi-Tasking Leads to Unconscious Eating

A Survey conducted at Rutgers University on multi-tasking and eating

Tag Words: Eating, Unconscious Eating, Dieting

Authors: Karen Chang, Alex Nicoletti, Tiffany Wang with Julie M. Fagan, Ph.D.

Summary (TF)

In our fast-paced lives, we have forgotten how to sit down and enjoy the food that we eat. How many times do we multi-task during mealtimes? Watch television during mealtimes? Do work simultaneously? We want to do as much as we can as quickly as we can, and if it means shoveling whatever food is available and convenient into our bodies in mass quantities, then so be it. The problem is that, by hardly taking the time to chew our food and realizing just what we're eating and how much we're eating, we over-consume. This type of mindless and unconscious eating has led to an increasingly destructive lifestyle that we, as a nation, are now combating. Our advanced lifestyle is becoming a threat to our health. Our goal is not to tell people that counting calories and restricting their diets is the only way to have a relationship with food that will not jeopardize their health. By using a survey to reach a sizable number of people, we hope to force people to think about how they eat, and then guide them to make subtle, small changes to the way they eat so that not only do they savor the sensory aspect and experience of eating, but learn that it really is not always about what you eat, but how you eat it.

Video link

Unconscious Eating: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7c-DDeJ5-o>

Part I: The Issue

I. Food Consumption and Eating (TW)

On the Necessities for Life

Arguably, there are several elements that are considered essential for life: oxygen, water, shelter from the elements, and food/energy to name a few. Of all of the aforementioned, the way in which we obtain and possess each of the four has changed over time from “ancient” times to modern-day. Oxygen is a basic necessity which we have altered the least in the methods by which we survive. We still utilize it mainly in its “natural” form--the air around us--the most we have done in terms of advancement in our obtaining oxygen is to develop systems and technology to filter unwanted particles and compounds from the air to “purify” and improve the quality of the oxygen which we take in. In terms of water, we have also taken the efforts to improve the overall quality of the water we drink--we purify it, filter it, de-ionize it--all in efforts to ensure that there is no harmful substance in the water. In terms of shelter, we have certainly become more sophisticated in our architecture. We all have that stereotypical image ingrained in our minds: teepees, wigwams, caves, clay houses, etc. Beginning structures for shelters were made out of the raw materials available in the immediate environment--in their crude form--something that people in modern society would never dream of reverting to for any extended period of time. Nowadays, we want our homes to make a statement and be more than just shelter; we want it more elaborate: the more unique, the better. However, perhaps nothing has changed more for us than the way in which we obtain food and the way we think about our food. And, unfortunately, this is what probably separates us the most from every other organism on the planet.

As beings of “higher” intellectual power, we often see ourselves as superior to other living beings--the end result of many, many years of evolution and adaptation. We may argue that our logical reasoning is the basis for our superiority and that we are far more advanced than other species, but in truth, without our carefully man-guided and crafted living environment, we as the now-most-sophisticated version of the human race would be lost. We have forgotten what it means to try and survive. We have forgotten how to survive. We have become so dependent on our shortcuts that we take basic needs for granted and assume that there are no consequences for ease of access to them.

In terms of food . . . since the beginning of mankind’s existence, the idea of obtaining energy in order to function has been universal. Eating, in particular, the ingestion of food so that our bodies can break it down and convert its various components into usable energy, was considered a necessity in order to survive. And so our predecessors lived to feed themselves and survive in a non-industrialized land. They ate what they could find, when they could find it; they ate whatever was available to them. Humans, starting out as nomads and hunter-gatherers, the first major “evolution” and advancement probably was the idea of agriculture--intentionally and

purposefully cultivating life forms for food. This enabled them to settle down at least for a while and not always be on the move, leaving an area when the game leaves. Living where their food may take them. In contrast, we do not consider food abundance a criterion for the location to which we may move or the location in which we may live. In fact, most of us who live away from the country probably cannot even imagine having to do so: never having a permanent place to call home, never knowing for sure whether or not there will be a successful game hunt that could last weeks. For us, to whom all the convenience of shelf-stable foods is available; for us, to whom all the convenience of grocery stores is available, living in this manner is no longer necessary. We live and work to achieve a standard of living that we enjoy; the average middle-class citizen does not have to work to ensure that there is enough food to stay afloat.

We eat because we “have” to, yes, but toward the end of the 20th century, we saw eating as something else. We began to eat for the experience and the sensation of eating. We ate for pleasure; we ate because it had become a habit; we ate because of the nutritional value of food aka “energy”--not necessarily the vitamins and minerals--and for the fact that food keeps us alive. But, the idea that food is a necessity is no longer a priority--we do not understand true hunger; we do not understand what it means to have our life depending on food. The rise of technology, the advances in agriculture, the rise of the food industry and whatnot have seen to our ability to acquire food easily and quickly. Perhaps, a little too easily and a little too quickly, though, for our health.

ii. On How Our Diets Have Changed in the Last Decades

Between the 1970’s and the year 2000, the USDA’s Economic Research Service collected data that suggests that each person’s daily calorie intake, on average, has risen 24.5%, or by ~530 calories, bringing the total average daily calorie intake per person to approximately 2,700 calories (USDA Agricultural Fact Book). Of these additional 530 calories, approximately 9.5% is attributed to increase in grain consumption (primarily refined grains aka confectionery goods), 9.0% to added fats and oils, and 4.7% to added sugars, while only 1.5% of the calorie increase is due to fruits and vegetables, 1% to meats and nuts, and 1.5% to dairy and eggs (USDA Agricultural Fact Book). But, aside from these numbers, what does this really mean for the people of the United States?

“According to the National Center for Health Statistics, an astounding 62 percent of adult Americans were overweight in 2000, up from 46 percent in 1980. Twenty-seven percent of adults were so far overweight that they were classified as obese (at least 30 pounds above their healthy weight)--twice the percentage classified as such in 1960.”

(USDA Agricultural Fact Book)

With the industrialization of America, the rise of the food industry and the rise of the fast food industry, we have shifted to a lifestyle of “meals on the run” (Riddle, 2008). It is easy to blame the food industry for our increasing waistlines and the rising incidences of obesity across America; it is easy to blame those “artificial” additives like High Fructose Corn Syrup and artificial sweeteners in our processed foods for our health problems, by adding in extra calories that our bodies do not need; but there’s more to the problem than what we eat. It is also of matter of how we eat. Forget the fact that our lunch and/or dinner might be a combination value meal from the fast food restaurant, easily totalling over 1000 calories (a medium-sized Whopper Value Meal from Burger King is estimated to be 1400 calories)--more than half the “standard” 2,000 calories for the average consumer (Burger King, 2011). The bigger question is do we bite, chew, and swallow until the tray in front of us is empty and still reach for more, or do we enjoy the food and eat only until we are full, leaving the rest for a later meal?

We have gone from working hard for our food and sustenance, appreciating where our food comes from and painstakingly cooking it to people who take food for granted. We hardly even think about eating anymore; we almost consider it a nuisance (except for those sweet treats that are our guilty pleasures!), and so we have forgotten to appreciate the experience and our food. There’s a term for the way we eat, and people call it “Mindless eating.” And, perhaps, those two words really are not far from the truth. Eating in front of the television set. Shoveling food into our mouths and swallowing as fast as possible in order to make it to a previous engagement on time. We’ve all done it. We eat on the run. We eat whatever is easy and convenient. We eat because we have a need to do something. We eat because we’re bored. We eat because we’re sad, mad, and happy. We eat without thinking--and therein lies the problem.

iii. On Eating in a Healthy Manner

Eating healthy is more than just choosing a variety of foods. It’s also how you eat them, where you eat them and the general environment. Do you eat with your friends and/or family? It makes for a more relaxed atmosphere and usually, due to conversations during mealtime, leads to a slowing down in eating. Are you watching television or surfing the internet while eating? Habits such as these can lead to mindless eating because our attention is diverted and we become unaware of the fact that we are eating. Do you give your body enough time to register that you have eaten or do you keep eating until your body finally says that it is full--only to have discovered later that it is uncomfortable to move? It takes at least 10 minutes for our body to realize that it has had enough to eat (Helpguide, 2010). Slowing down and making it a point to enjoy eating . . . this is something that we have forgotten in our rush to be better. This is a skill that we have lost, and it is killing our future prematurely.

Burger King. 2011. <www.bk.com>

Helpguide. 2010. Healthy Eating. <<http://www.helpguide.org/>>

Riddle, Sarah. 2008. “Ten Tips for Conscious Eating.” pennlive.com.

<http://blog.pennlive.com/holistic-nutritionist/2008/08/ten_tips_for_conscious_eating.html>
USDA. Profiling Food Consumption in America. In *Agricultural Fact Book*.
(Year Unknown)

II. Consequences of Unconscious Eating (TW)

"During unconscious eating, your mind is typically blank and you don't know for sure how many minutes went by, never mind how many calories were consumed. Your ability to make conscious decisions about what or how much you eat is clouded and you become 'numb' to fullness cues."

~Ellen Hotger Hiemstra

This unconscious eating would not be an issue if we compensated in some other manner for the calories that we consume in this mindless state. However, with the sedentary lifestyle being so prominent and possible, we can do everything we need to--all while sitting down.

Perhaps, the most glaringly obvious consequence of unconscious eating is that, due to the sheer number of excess calories, it can lead to obesity. The most common measure for obesity is through determining a person's BMI, or body mass index, which is a ratio of weight to height-squared. Officially, a BMI of 30 or greater would qualify a person as being clinically obese, while a BMI between 25 and 30 only qualifies a person as being overweight (CDC, 2011). (However, it should be noted that BMI can be an inaccurate measure of health-risk because it does not measure percent body fat versus percent muscle.) Over the past several decades, the prevalence of obesity has tripled among Americans, and with it, increased risks for a variety of cardiovascular and other diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention highlight additional health effects of being overweight and obese. For example, it increases the risk of coronary heart disease, Type II Diabetes, hypertension, etc. just to name a few (CDC, 2011). Coronary Heart Disease occurs when there is plaque build-up in the arteries, which subsequently obstructs oxygen flow to the heart and organs--this places a strain on the heart and can cause heart pain and or failure (NHLBI, 2011). Other related risks include high blood pressure--a result of having to use more force to pump blood through plaque-clotted arteries--as well as suffering a stroke--the result of a rupture in the area of plaque build-up which can then cause a blood clot (NHLBI, 2011).

Type II Diabetes is, perhaps, of more concern as a highly probably health consequence of being overweight and/or obese. According to a report from the CDC published in 2004, the condition of being obese contributed to more than half of the incidence of Type II Diabetes. Originally also known as Adult-Onset Diabetes [because it was usually only diagnosed in adults age 40 and older], this is no longer true with the rise of childhood obesity over the last several decades (CDC, 2011). Being overweight and/or obese in childhood also increases the likelihood that the child will be/become overweight or obese as adults. Also, subsequently, a child with

overweight/obese parents has an increased likelihood for becoming overweight or obese--thus, creating a cycle that becomes exacerbated as time passes.

Michael Pollan, the writer of several books, including *In Defense of Food* and *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual*, speaks of how nutritional science itself is actually a rather young science. We hear all about certain properties of ingredients, such as anti-oxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, etc. and we “know” that they are good for us, but there is no universal answer for what we should be eating--because scientists do not yet understand what exactly happens in the body once a particular substance is consumed. So, rather than focusing on these individual components of foods, Pollan focuses on the broader spectrum, which includes a section on *how* people should eat. Pollan emphasizes that it is important to cultivate a healthy relationship with our food: “Better to pay the grocer than the doctor” (Pollan, 2009). The first few rules he outlines all directly relate to eating less: “Pay more, eat less”; “. . . Eat Less”; “Stop eating before you’re full” (Pollan, 2009). But, the gist of it is that people need to remember how to appreciate the food experience; they need to slow down, chew their food, put the fork down in between bites. Pollan’s message is for people to eat food, but appreciate it, and by appreciating every bite, this fosters a healthy relationship with food, as opposed to the mindless eating that we have become accustomed to.

CDC. Healthy Weight. 2011. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/index.html>>

NHLBI. 2011. National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>>

Pollan, Michael. 2009. *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual*.

III. Outcome of unconscious eating (often cause people to adopt extreme dieting) (KC)

Mindless eating for pleasure and comfort not only often causes people to gain weight overtime but also initiates the development of some ‘treatable’ diseases such as type II diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. As a result of weight gain and its poses to human health, people would start dieting for weight loss and for prevention themselves from the ‘treatable’ diseases.

Unfortunately, with limited time factor and the desire to shed pounds quickly, whenever comes to diet, some will adopt fad diet or crash diet to help them achieve their goal in a short time. Fad diet or crash diet is known as a quick weigh loss program that will show the dramatic result within small period of time (Crash and Burn: Yo-Yo and Crash Dieting, 2009). According to Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), they estimate that two third of American adults are on diet or try to lose weight (Matt, 2008). Women are the major participants in the weight loss program and only 5% of dieter has successfully maintained their healthy weight after they get off the diet programs (Matt, 2008). This statistic indicates that people are aware of what they eat while they are in diet program instead of how they eat when they get off those programs. In other words, people lose weight while on the dieting program is because they watch what they

eat, but whenever they get off the dieting plan, they would still be alert of what they eat, but not how they eat (i.e. portion control, calories restriction...). This issue, however, unravels the fact that mindless eating and lack of self restriction may be the greatest reasons contribute to the weight gain. The consequences of our lack of self restriction on eating, our laziness to exercise, our curiosity and eagerness to lose weight rapidly, all of these, guide us to adopt fad diet or crash diet even though we know the detrimental effects on our health at the back of our mind. However, to pacify the increasing demands on effective and rapid weight loss programs, numerous fad diet plans were invented. The most popular fad diets are Atkins diet, weight watcher, slim fast diet, south beach diet, grapefruit diet, cabbage soup diet, detox diet, Hollywood diet...etc (Fad Diets, 2011). Among all of these fad diet, the most recent and well known fad diets such as Nutrisystem, Atkins and Hollywood diet will be further investigate for its function and its pros and cons.

Atkins Diet

Atkins diet program was invented by Dr. Robert C. Atkins in 1963. The program was designed to switch body from burning carbohydrates for energy to burning primarily fat (How and Why Atkins Works, 2011). Originally, the main source of energy for body is from simple carbohydrate, glucose. However, if one restricts the carbohydrate intake, body would produce less insulin and eventually use fat as another source of energy (How and Why Atkins Works, 2011). Thus, reducing carbohydrate intake not only reduces the insulin level in blood stream but also forces the body to burn fat. In addition, the reasons for eating less carbohydrate is because glucose will stimulate released of insulin which converts the excess glucose in blood stream into fat (Klein, 2011). Thus, the lesser the carbohydrate one consumes, the fewer the insulin production and therefore the lesser the fat will be stored when there is excess glucose in the blood stream.

With this principle, Atkins diet composes four phases where carbohydrate intake is highly controlled. For phase one, participant can only consume net 20 grams of carbohydrate per day for continuation of two weeks until the weight loss occur (Phase 1-Objective of Inductions, 2011). When the participants lose some weight at phase one, they can move to phase two called Ongoing Weight Loss which abbreviates as OWL. In this phase, participant can increase the amount of net carbohydrate intake to 25 grams by adding more fibrous vegetable and fruit into the diet (The Objective of Ongoing Weight Loss, 2011). At this phase, people are informed to find their carbohydrate level for losing (CLL), which is the amounts of net carbohydrate that one can consume while continuing to lose weight (Finding Your Personal Tolerance for Carbs in OWL, 2011). However, when people lose desired amount of weight at second phase, they can move on to phase three and four. Phase three and four are the maintenance phases where people keep increase their carbohydrate intake until they can maintain their weight (Objective of Pre-Maintenance & Objective of Lifetime Maintenance, 2011).

The benefit of Atkins diet is that people will experience weight loss while on the program. With restriction on carbohydrate intake, people might have less potential to develop diabetes. In addition, the carbohydrate restriction also shape individual to become more vigilant on the types of carbohydrate they consume in the future (Klein, 2011). Even though restriction on carbohydrate intake can prevent development of diabetes, the extreme lack of carbohydrate causes depletion of glycogen which forces liver to undergo gluconeogenesis where converting amino acid to glucose (Klein, 2011). Since the gluconeogenesis depletes oxaloacetate, the vital initiator for acetyl CoA to enter the citric acid cycle for energy production (Tymoczko et al., 2010). To compensate this, liver generates ketone bodies from fatty acid in the blood stream where brain and body can use ketone bodies as a temporary source of energy (Tymoczko et al., 2010 & Klein, 2011). However, ketone bodies are medium-strong acid where it can overwhelm the kidney and lower the blood pH level (Tymoczko et al., 2010). Besides that, ketone bodies give people bad breath and constipation (Klein, 2011). Also, the high fat and protein diet while adopting this program can lead people to develop kidney failure, kidney stones formation, high cholesterol, heart disease and osteoporosis in a long run (Klein, 2011).

Hollywood Diet

Hollywood diet was invented by Jamie Kabler when he experienced weight loss after attending a health spa program in Europe (About Hollywood Miracle Diet, 2011). His success weight loss led him introduced 48 Hours Miracle Diet on December 1997 where it designed to lose 10 pounds in 48 hours when the participants follow the specific instruction on the diet (About Hollywood Miracle Diet, 2011). To pacify its popular demand, now, Hollywood diet has expanded into variety of products such are Hollywood diet cookies, Hollywood miracle drink, Hollywood body detox cleanser...etc (Hollywood Diet-Products, 2011).

Hollywood 48 Miracle Drink is an orange color drink which designed to replace the meals for 48 hours period (Davidson, 2011). It is a drink made from many juices concentrate fortified with various essential vitamins and minerals (Davidson, 2011). The participants are required to mix four ounces of the concentrate miracle drink with four ounces of water; and to consume this product four times per day with at least four hours lapse. Four ounces of miracle drink provides 100 Calories with 25 grams of carbohydrate, 20 mg of sodium, 22 grams of sugar, 75% daily value vitamin A,B,C,D, and E; and no fat nor protein per serving. Thus, when participants adhere to the guideline, they only allow having total 400 Calories per day without protein, fat and dietary fiber (Davidson, 2011).

Because of its extreme low in calories, Hollywood 48 Miracle Diet is a short term weight loss program that is suitable for people who has more than 30% excess body fat (Davidson, 2011). Again, this program is not an ideal lifetime diet because it did not provide any recommendation for exercise nor it did not inform the healthy ways to lose weight (Davidson, 2011). Also, the program claims that participant will lose 10 pounds in two days which is losing five pounds per

day. However, this estimation is unrealistic because each individual has different body mass, body weight and different metabolisms rates. Moreover, the company also suggests the participants to repeat the diet until they reach their desired weight (Davidson, 2011). Even though this diet program might eventually work, but, there is no clear benefit of adopting this extreme diet. The outcomes for people who stick on this extreme diet for a long period of time will suffer from nutrient deficiency due to lack of essential proteins and fats for proper body function (Davidson, 2011). Also, once the dieters return to the normal meal, they will experience weight gain rapidly if they do not restrict their daily calorie intake. Nevertheless, this program is mostly designed for obese person with proper medical supervision (Davidson, 2011). Even though people will experience rapid weight loss, the participants should be aware that the long term adhering to this extreme diet will cause gallstones and cardiovascular diseases development in the future (Davidson, 2011).

Nutrisystem

Nutrisystem is a program promoting balanced diet that is low in glycemic index with proper portion controlled and calories restriction (Nutrisystem Diet, 2011). In this program, dieters could order their meals online, and the foods will be send directly to them (Nutrisystem Diet, 2011). The meal plan includes three course meals and two snacks for entire 28 days period. The entree and desserts offer by Nutrisystem are high in protein, fiber, low in glycemic index, fat, sodium and no transfat (The Science Behind Nutrisystem-Lean How It Works, 2011). The pros for this diet program is that people learn how to eat healthy by consuming foods in moderation or in specific portion. Even though this program seems reasonable to try without sacrificing our health, but bear in mind, this weight loss program is optimum for short term instead of the long term simply because most dieters will not continue buying food like this for the rest of their life; and they will become unappetizing to eat the similar food after certain period of time (Nutrisystem Diet, 2011). With all these fad diet programs, we can see how these programs manipulate participants' calories intake to achieve their desired weight instead of providing specific guidelines for how to eat or how to enjoy the food to avoid mindless eating.

References

About Hollywood Miracle Diet. 2011. February 25, 2011

<<http://www.hollywooddiet.com/extra/about.php>>.

"Chapter 26-Fatty Acid Degradation." Tymoczko, John L. and Jeremy M. and Stryer, Lubert Berg. Biochemistry-A Short Course. New York: W.F. Freeman and Company, 2010. 404-416.

Crash and Burn: Yo-Yo and Crash Dieting. 2009. February 25, 2011.

<http://www.epigee.org/fitness/crash_diets.html>.

Davidson, Helen M. Hollywood Diets. 2011. February 25, 2011

<<http://www.diet.com/g/hollywood-diet>>.

Fad Diets. 2011. February 25, 2011 <http://www.everydiet.org/fad_diets.htm>.

Finding Your Personal Tolerance for Carbs in OWL. 2011. February 24, 2011 <<http://www.atkins.com/Program/Phase2/ObjectivesofOWL/YourPersonalToleranceforCarbsFindingYourCLL.aspx>>.

Hollywood Diet-Products. 2011. February 25, 2011 <http://www.hollywooddiet.com/index.php?_a=list>.

How and Why Atkins Works. 2011. February 24, 2011 <<http://www.atkins.com/Program/ProgramOverview/HowandWhyAtkinsWorks.aspx>>.

Klein, Allison. How the Atkins Diet Works. 2011. February 25, 2011 <<http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/diet-fitness/weight-loss/atkins5.htm>>.

Matt. Fad Diets: Why They Are Bad & How To Spot Them/ Diet & Nutrition. 24 August 2008. 24 February 2011 <<http://www.answerfitness.com/186/fad-diets-why-they-are-bad-diet-nutrition/>>.

Nutrisystem Diets . 2011. February 26, 2011 <<http://www.everydiet.org/diet/nutrisystem>>.

Objective of Lifetime Maintenance. 2011. February 24, 2011 <<http://www.atkins.com/Program/Phase4/ObjectivesofLifetimeMaintenance.aspx>>.

Objective of Pre-Maintenance. 2011. February 24, 2011 <<http://www.atkins.com/program/phase3/ObjectivesofPre-Maintenance.aspx>>.

Phase 1-Objective of Inductions. 2011. February 24, 2011 <<http://www.atkins.com/Program/Phase1/ObjectivesofInduction.aspx>>.

The Objective of Ongoing Weight Loss . 2011. February 24, 2011 <<http://www.atkins.com/program/phase2/ObjectivesofOWL.aspx>>.

The Science Behind Nutrisystem-Lean How It Works. 2011. February 25, 2011 <http://www.nutrisystem.com/jsps_hmr/how_it_works/why_it_works.jsp>.

IV. Outcome of adopting these “extreme” diets (KC)

Even though these fad diets work for others in a short run, but in a long term, many severe health problems will occur both mentally and physically which cost more money and effort to recover. For instance, the extreme low calorie diet such as Hollywood Diet lowers the metabolism rates in order to accommodate the low calorie intake which result in a lower calorie burn and slower metabolism rates. Thus, when the person returns back to the normal diet, they will experience weight gain rapidly (Crash and Burn: Yo-Yo and Crash Dieting, 2009). This is because these fad diets are only controlled what they eat instead of teaching them how to eat properly when they get off the diet program. The fluctuation of weight loss and weight gain often associates with eating disorders where people correlate eating to weight gain (Crash and Burn: Yo-Yo and Crash Dieting, 2009). As a result of this wrong concept, people would stop eating to starve themselves or to binge until they felt guilty. These eating disorders will cause drastic detrimental effects on health which could be profoundly impacted for the rest of the life (i.e. tooth decay or damaging on esophagus due to excess induced vomiting after binging) (Wardlaw et al., 2007). In addition,

the high protein and high fat diet will cause liver failure, kidney failure, osteoporosis, high cholesterol and heart diseases (Klein, 2011). An extreme low fat diet will cause organs to burn muscles tissue to produce energy for the body. Burning tissues for energy will eventually lead to serious health problems such as kidney failure, heart failure, kidney failure...etc (Crash and Burn: Yo-Yo and Crash Dieting, 2009). Thus, with all of these fad diets and the consequences of detrimental health problems, people should not only consider thrice before adopting these fad diets, but also learn both how to eat and what to eat in order to avoid unconscious eating and to successfully maintain the healthy weight in a long run.

References

Crash and Burn: Yo-Yo and Crash Dieting. 2009. February 25, 2011.

<http://www.epigee.org/fitness/crash_diets.html>.

Klein, Allison. How the Atkins Diet Works. 2011. February 25, 2011

<<http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/diet-fitness/weight-loss/atkins5.htm>>.

"Chapter 12-Eating Disorders: Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa and Other conditions."

Wardlaw, Gordon M. and Smith Anne M. Contemporary Nutrition-Sixth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2007. 409-434.

V. What is the ultimate solution for this outcome? (i.e. awareness) (AN)

There are ways to overcome the unhealthy eating habits that many individuals are facing in today. The idea is make them aware of what they are consuming, how they are consuming food and their lack of physical activity. People do not realize what they consume or how much they consume on a daily basis. Also inactivity plays a significant role in health problems, obesity and there are many excuses why individuals feel they do not need to exercise. For our project we decided to conduct a survey and inform them on the benefits of keeping a daily journal, eating healthy and adopting an exercise regime.

The survey was used as a guideline for our group to get an idea of people's eating habits. It provided us with basic information which would lead us to the objective of our project; to make individuals aware of their eating habits. By having them take a survey it might bring upon the awareness needed for the individual to live a healthier lifestyle. Surveys are very beneficial for the researcher as well as individuals partaking in them. The key is to make it short and concise, give clear instructions, state why you are conducting the survey, and do not ask questions that are too personal that might deter people from participating. It has been proposed that the more you are aware and control your eating habits, it will be considerably easier to manage your food eating behaviors. The goal of the survey was to bring about awareness as well as knowledgeable information about how the food you eat is not only the issue but the way you choose to eat it.

Some people have acute awareness on what they are putting into their bodies. These people are known as maintainers. They are aware of what they eat, they exercise to stay fit, and wear clothes that show their body so it gives them an incentive to keep pushing forward with a healthy regime. They are not necessarily on a strict diet they just understand what is needed and contains a little self-discipline. On the other side of the spectrum, the “relapsers” are individuals who turn to food as a coping mechanism. They tend to eat due to significant stress, depression, boredom, and other emotional reasons. So they necessarily are not aware of what they are consuming nonetheless care because there are “substantial reasons” why they are doing what they are doing. They hope food will be the answer and the problem will just completely diminish.

A daily journal is a good habit for individuals to have in their daily life to keep them on a healthy track. People must first become conscious of what they are eating and how they use food before they can start a food journal. People may be ill informed about how to take care of themselves and how to do it in the correct manner. So it is beneficial to do this in a group setting because it will help keep motivation, they can help each other if there are questions, and someone will be less likely to return back to their old ways. If they are having a bad day they will have the moral support from others that are enduring the same obstacles. By keeping a journal it will be undoubtedly shocking for some individuals on how much and what they consume. Also the journal can be kept for when the person is consuming the food, how they are consuming the food, and how long it took them to finish eating. The journal should be kept for 4-12 weeks. This will have a greater effect than just doing it for a week or two.

People are blissfully unaware of what they consume on a daily basis. Their calorie intake may be very high or even low in some instances. The journal could have positive effects by individuals starting healthy eating habits. It has been proven that following a regular, balanced, healthy diet an individual can lose up to 20 pounds in a few weeks. It can also reduce the amounts of medication a person might have to take on a daily basis due to being overweight. This is due to the fact that most of the diseases today are from unhealthy consumption of food. Eating healthy will also affect a person’s physical appearance. It can make a person look younger and feel and look refreshed. The natural glow and dewiness of the skin will be replenished and the individual will look rejuvenated. Many individuals turn to unhealthy choices when they are stressed but if they choose a healthier food product all the stress will be relieved and they will feel emotionally and physically better about themselves. When a person releases stress they will be able to gradually lose weight.

VI. The key to stay healthy (AN)

People must be fully dedicated to eating healthy because this something that takes a lot of time and precision. It is recommended that one makes simple and small adjustments to their daily consumption instead of making a drastic change to their life at once. They should be worried

about the quality of the food in terms of color, freshness, and making sure they eat a variety of food. It is known that if an individual tries to change everything at once and go into a diet “cold turkey” they are bound to fail and just go back to their old ways. It is a misconception that if a person is on a diet they have to cut out all the foods that they love but in reality they just have to eat them in moderation. If the individual reduced the portion size of that particular food that they enjoy and eat it less eventually they will be able to cut it out of their diet completely. People must realize what realistic portion size is. Today in the United States the portion sizes are 2-3 times larger than what the actual size of certain food products should be. Also how an individual eats can affect their health and body image. People should be acutely aware to when they are hungry and make sure to nourish their body at that specific time. They should always eat breakfast and smaller meals throughout the day instead of 2 big meals each day. It will help the individual stay alert and keep their energy level up throughout the day. They should understand what are good fats and bad fats. Omega-3, Omega-6, monosaturated and polysaturated fats should be added to the diet where as saturated and trans fats should be subtracted from the diet. Limiting foods that are high in sugar and sodium content will also be beneficial. Eating more fiber, healthy carbohydrates and protein are good sources of energy and should be consumed almost every day. Even planning meals ahead of time will benefit individuals in helping with their weight loss. If they plan them a couple days ahead of time and keep a full stocked pantry and refrigerator they should be no excuse as to why they should order take out. All of these ideas are recommended for those who wish to change their lifestyle around and take charge of their life. (Maya, 2011)

Some seem to think that only diets will help them get healthy and get the physical appearance they have always wanted but that is not necessarily true. Exercise and eating a healthy diet go hand and hand. One does not benefit from just doing one alone. Some people feel that exercise is boring, frustrating, and just too difficult so they try to refrain from doing any at all. So they should find something that they like and intriguing so it will motivate and entertain them so they do not feel like they are working out. Not only does exercise help a person manage weight, it has an influence on an individual’s mood. Certain chemicals in the brain are released while working out and by the end of exercising, the individual feels better about themselves and they are left stress free and happy. Exercise also gives the individual more stamina which is beneficial for the heart and blood circulation. It makes the individual have stronger heart and lungs which in turn will help them live a stronger, healthier, longer life. It can help fight against heart disease which is known to be the number killer in the nation. This is a very unfortunate situation since it can be easily fixed by changing ones diet and activity level. Physical activity reduces risk of developing diseases, reduces blood pressure, blood sugar levels that will help people suffering from diabetes, and improve blood lipid levels. Exercise also promotes a better nights rest. It improves a person’s mood and how productive they will be throughout their days work. They will find it easier to concentrate and will excel in whatever they are doing. It is better to start off your day with exercise or early evening that way your energy level is up and by the end of the day you

will be exhausted and able to get that 7-8 hours of sleep that is recommended. It is recommended that children should do physical activity at 60 minutes a day and adults should get at least 150 minutes of exercise each week. People will have a better quality of life if they just take control and not let food override them.

Adopting this healthy regime and seeing a doctor on a regular basis will help the individual lower their chances of developing certain diseases associated with unhealthy eating habits and lack of physical activity. For someone that is overweight or obese and has decided to watch their food intake and exercise must go see their primary doctor for regular checkups so they can be evaluated. It is important that they get screened before they endure a heavy activity just in case they are already suffering from some debilitating disease. This is for precautionary reasons because if the person does strenuous activity that their body is not used to they could get severely injured or even hospitalized. So the initial step would be to see a physician get a series of tests to evaluate current condition and then base physical activity off of the results. Once the individual has exercised for a good period of time they will be able to increase their activities and build greater endurance. (Heart.org, 2011)

Fad diets are not as beneficial as some individuals tend to think. They might work at first but they do not have long term effects. As soon as the person stops the diet, they will regain all the weight back that they have lost. Also people lose sight that fad diets are not very nutritional. Nutrition is lost throughout the dieting process due to strict guidelines of the diets. This is why eating healthy and exercising on your own terms is the way to a better life. It has to be incorporated into their personal lifestyle so they do not get overwhelmed and quit. It is important to understand that a balanced diet and exercise are the most productive way to lose and manage weight. The individual must think smart about their choices of food, means of consumption, and be optimistic about their journey to a healthier life.

References

1. Dugan, Jennifer. "Physician, Nutritionist Say Diet, Exercise Key to Healthier 2011 - Troyrecord.com." *The Record: Serving Troy and Its Surrounding Communities (Troyrecord.com)*. 2011. Web. 01 Mar. 2011.
<<http://www.troyrecord.com/articles/2010/12/29/news/doc4d1abe4abd02e820351074.txt?viewmode=fullstory>>.
2. "Get Informed, Get Empowered, and Get Active." *Www.heart.org*. 2011. Web. 01 Mar. 2011.
<http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/PhysicalActivity/GettingActive/Get-Informed-Get-Empowered-and-Get-Active_UCM_305117_SubHomePage.jsp#recommended>.

3. Paul, Maya W. "Easy Tips for Planning a Healthy Diet & Sticking to It." *Helpguide.org: Expert, Ad-free Articles Help Empower You with Knowledge, Support & Hope*. Jan. 2011. Web. 01 Mar. 2011. <http://www.helpguide.org/life/healthy_eating_diet.htm>.

The Service Project: Survey

generated using surveymonkey.com (max is 10 questions)

Page 1:

Q1: (open-ended)

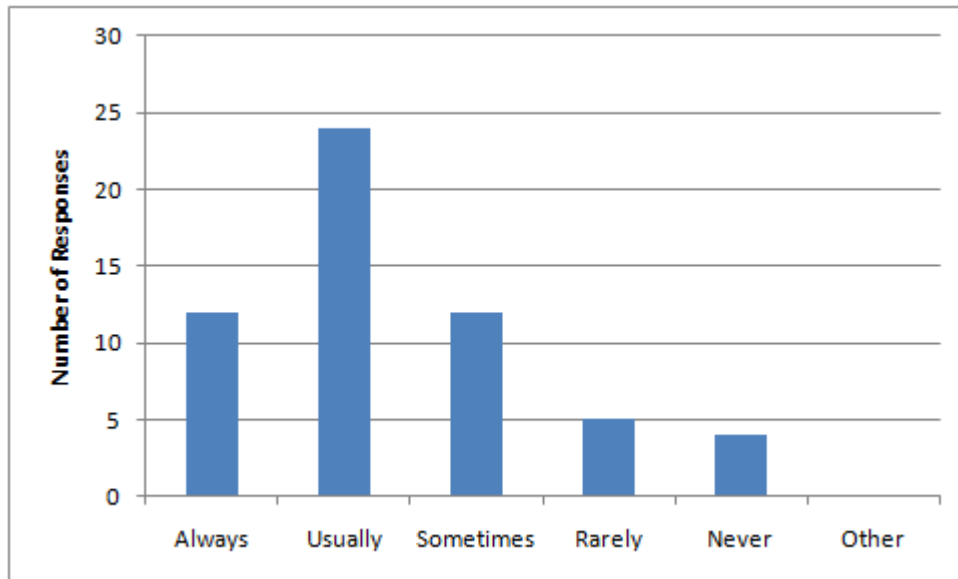
What do you consider to be the definition of “eating healthy”?

Majority of answers dealt with eating a variety, a balanced diet; eat in moderation, stay away from fatty foods; all relevant answers dealt with what was eaten versus how meals were eaten

- healthy foods; not too much junk food; fruit and vegetables; limited or no fried foods, fast foods, microwaveable meals, sweets (don’t over-indulge); don’t over or under-eat calorie-wise; fresh foods, etc.

Q2: (multiple choice; one answer)

How often do you consider what you will be eating, before you eat it? (*i.e.* nutritional content, portion sizes, etc.)

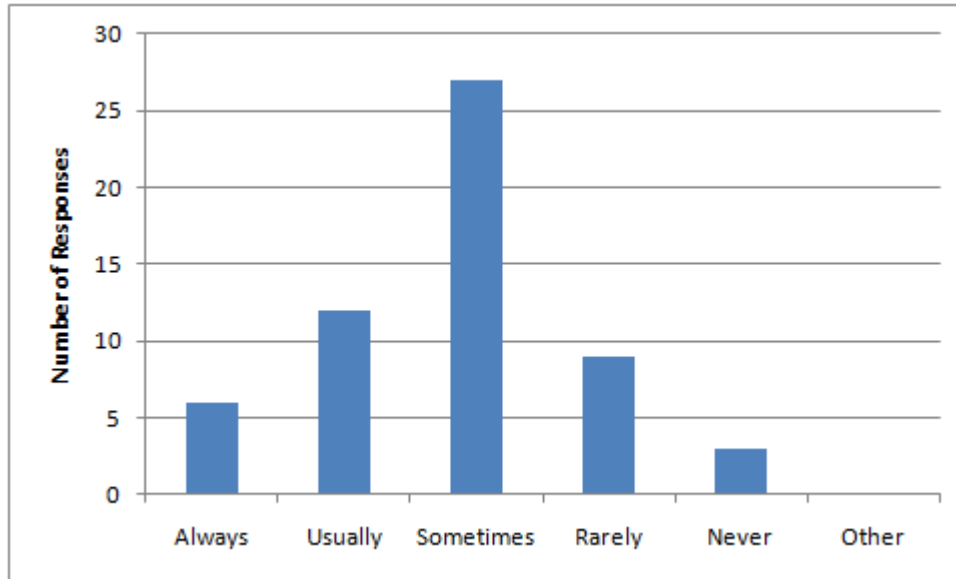


- Always (21.1%)
- **Usually (42.1%)**
- Sometimes (21.1%)
- Rarely (8.8%)

- Never (7.0%)
- Other (please specify)

Q3: (multiple choice; one answer)

How often do you think about the conditions under which you are eating?

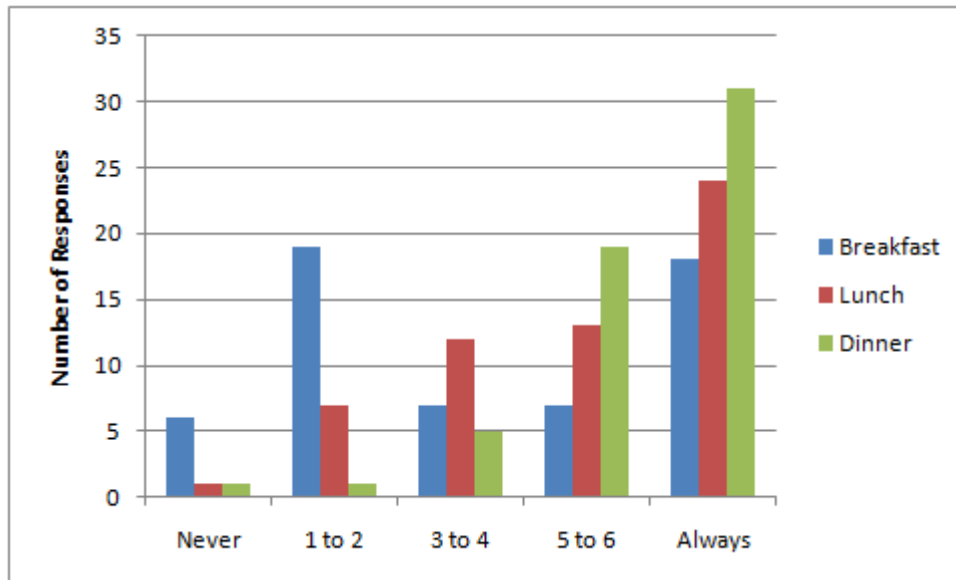


- Always (10.5%)
- Usually (21.1%)
- **Sometimes (47.4%)**
- Rarely (15.8%)
- Never (5.3%)
- Other (please specify)

Page 2:

Q4: (Matrix of choices; one answer per row)

How often do you sit down and eat the following meals?



Breakfast?

- Never (10.5%)
- **1-2 times a week (33.3%)**
- 3-4 times a week (12.3%)
- 5-6 times a week (12.3%)
- Always (31.6%)

Lunch?

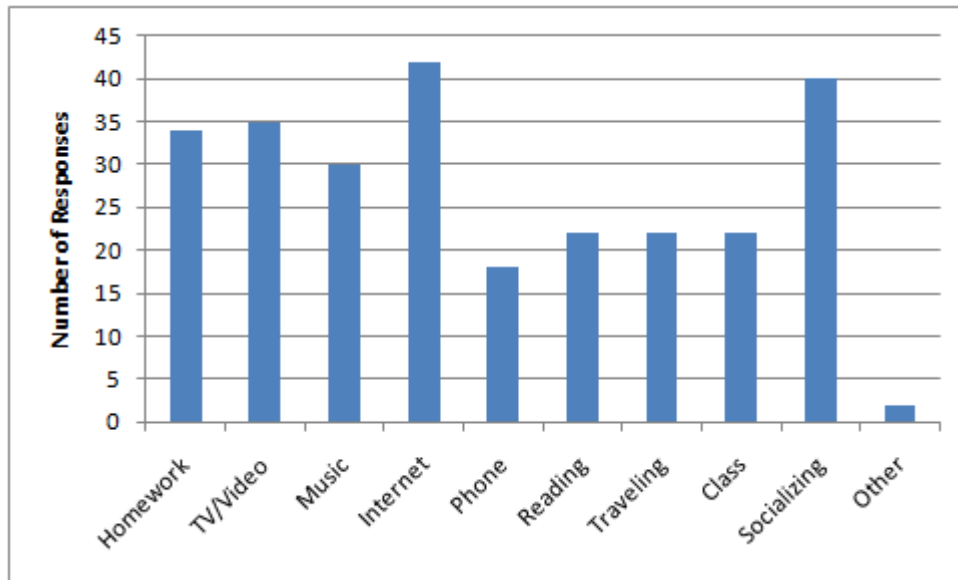
- Never (1.8%)
- 1-2 times a week (12.3%)
- 3-4 times a week (21.1%)
- 5-6 times a week (22.8%)
- **Always (42.1%)**

Dinner?

- Never (1.8%)
- 1-2 times a week (1.8%)
- 3-4 times a week (8.8%)
- 5-6 times a week (33.3%)
- **Always (54.4%)**

Q5: (Multiple Choice)

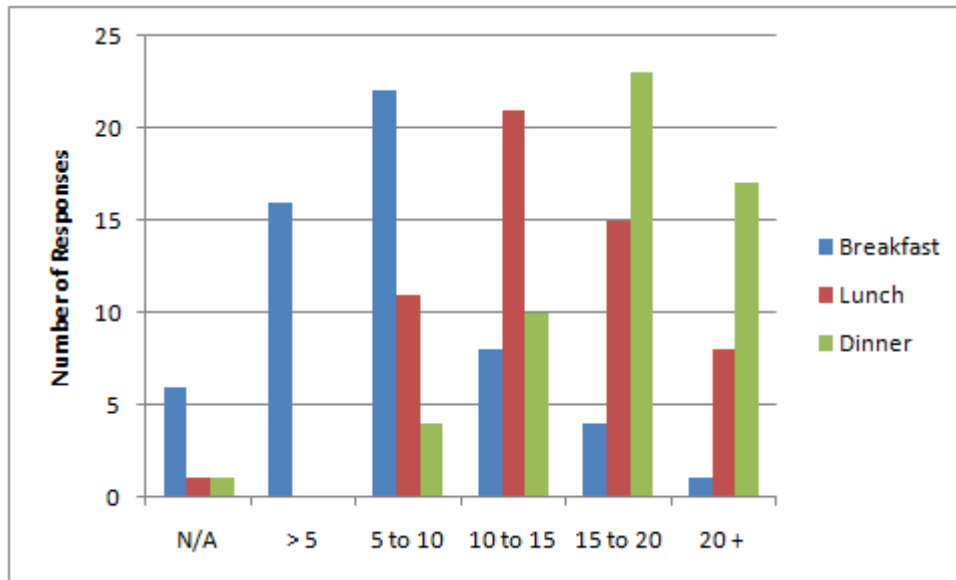
Do you multi-task with any of the following while eating? (Choose all that apply)



- Homework (59.6%)
- Television/Video (61.4%)
- Listen to music (52.6%)
- **Internet (73.7%)**
- Talking on the phone (31.6%)
- Reading (38.6%)
- Traveling (*i.e.* going to work/class/etc., driving, etc.) (38.6%)
- In Class (38.6%)
- Socializing (70.2%)
- Other (please specify) (3.5%)
 - "I don't multi-task while eating. I happen to enjoy my food"

Q6: (Matrix of Choices; one answer per row)

On a typical day, how quickly do you finish eating...?



Breakfast?

- N/A (10.5%)
- within 5 minutes (28.1%)
- **5-10 minutes (40.4%)**
- 10-15 minutes (14.0%)
- 15-20 minutes (5.3%)
- 20+ minutes (1.8%)

Lunch?

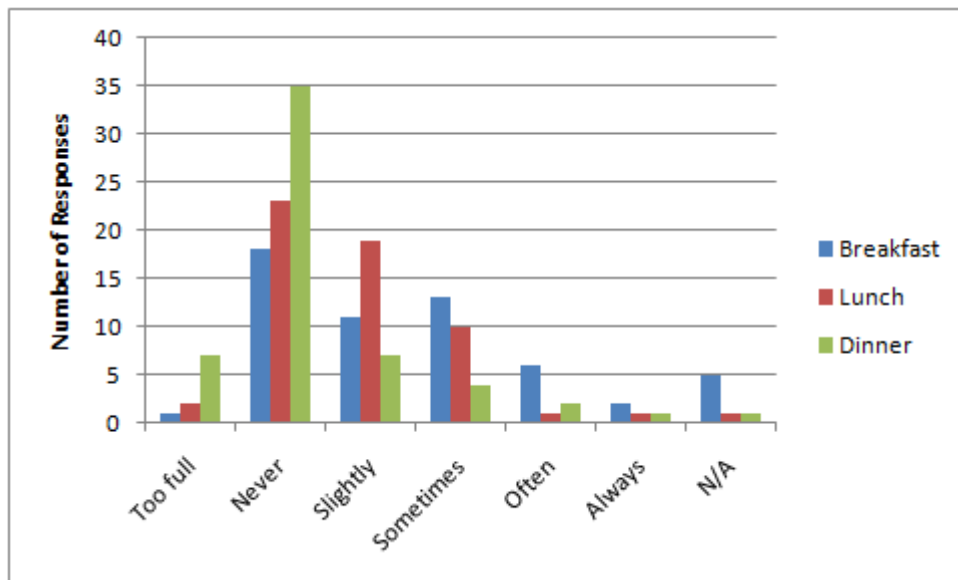
- N/A (1.8%)
- within 5 minutes (0.0%)
- 5-10 minutes (19.6%)
- **10-15 minutes (37.5%)**
- 15-20 minutes (26.8%)
- 20+ minutes (14.3%)

Dinner?

- N/A (1.8%)
- within 5 minutes (0.0%)
- 5-10 minutes (7.3%)
- 10-15 minutes (18.2%)
- **15-20 minutes (41.8%)**
- 20+ minutes (30.9%)

Q7: (Matrix of Choices; one answer per row)

How often and/or to what extent do you still feel hungry after finishing the following meals?



Breakfast?

- Too full (1.8%)
- **Never hungry, comfortably satiated (32.1%)**
- Slightly hungry, but manageable (19.6%)
- Sometimes, may or may not eat a little more (23.2%)
- Often, could go for a snack (10.7%)
- Always, feels like I haven't eaten at all (3.6%)
- N/A (8.9%)

Lunch?

- Too full (3.5%)
- **Never hungry, comfortably satiated (40.4%)**
- Slightly hungry, but manageable (33.3%)
- Sometimes, may or may not eat a little more (17.5%)
- Often, could go for a snack (1.8%)
- Always, feels like I haven't eaten at all (1.8%)
- N/A (1.8%)

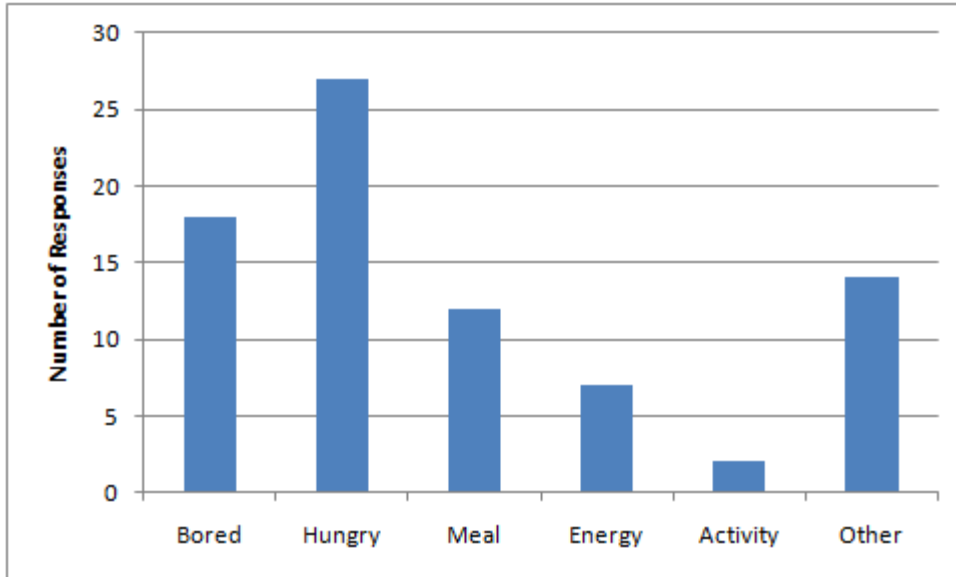
Dinner?

- Too full (12.3%)
- **Never hungry, comfortably satiated (61.4%)**
- Slightly hungry, but manageable (12.3%)
- Sometimes, may or may not eat a little more (7.0%)
- Often, could go for a snack (3.5%)
- Always, feels like I haven't eaten at all (1.8%)
- N/A (1.8%)

Other (please specify)

Q8: (open-ended)

What are the reasons for you to have reached for a snack over the last few days, if at all?

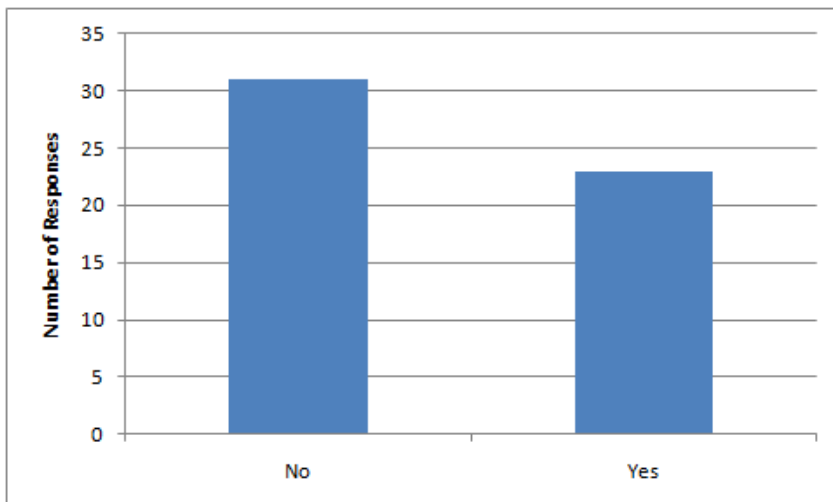


Bored/It's there/Felt Like It	(31.0%)
Hungry	(46.6%)
Taking place of Meal	(20.7%)
Energy	(12.1%)
Accompany Activity (<i>i.e.</i> TV)	(3.4%)
Other (<i>i.e.</i> Cravings)	(24.1%)

Page 3:

Q9: (open-ended)

Have you ever gone on a diet? If yes, what kind of diet did/have you adopted, and was it effective (short-term and long-term, if applicable)?



No (53.4%)

Yes (39.7%)

- eat multiple smaller meals during the day (worked for one; not the other)
- Atkins (not successful)
- “Healthy Eating” (long term success)
- Calorie-counting or watching what one eats
 - ate less; tendency to be hungry
- Cutting out certain foods *i.e.* soda, confectionary goods, etc. (usually adopt for short-term)
- Low-Carb (successful in short-term; doesn’t work long-term)
- Protein Diet (circumstance specific)
- Weight Watchers (no comment on success or failure)
- Special K (including elimination of sweets and soda; no comment on success or failure)
- Crash Diet (success in short-term)

Q10: (open-ended)

If I told you that maintaining a healthy body weight was as easy as changing the way you eat your food--not even changing the type of food you eat--what would be your response?

Analysis of responses revealed a surprising number of people in agreement with the statement, still others who were intrigued by the statement, those who were skeptical, and those who thought it a joke.

Agreement:	(31%)
Interest	(25.9%)
Skeptical	(19%)
Suggestion which is correct	(3.4%)
Already do it	(5.2%)
Don’t have time	(5.2%)
Think it’s a joke	(5.2%)
Other	(13.8%)

no interest

anger/hostility that we know nothing about long term body weight

looking to gain weight

More than simply changing the manner in which one eats (50%)

No other options at college

Editorials

The ideal way for healthy weight loss

Karen Chang

(Send to New York Times Op-Ed)

After the long winter time munching in front of television mindlessly, huddling in a cozy place while drinking hot chocolate and attending many holiday parties, people might experience gaining extra pounds during those festivals. However, now, summer is on the way. This is the time where people, especially girls, want to lose weight for better outlook in prom dresses, weddings or other special events, etc. Unfortunately, with busy life paced and sedentary life style, whenever comes to diet, people often think of quick weight loss programs (fad diets), weight controlled pills, crash diet or exercise for some extent. Unbalanced diets and weight controlled pills might work for a short time, but it will not achieve weight loss healthily in a long run.

Many famous fad diets called for restrictions on carbohydrate intake, calories intake, fat intakes, etc which affect one's mental and physical health in a long term. For instance, the diet that is high in protein and fat; and low in carbohydrate will cause development of kidney failure, kidney stones, high cholesterol, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Low calorie diet will result in a lower calorie burn and reduce the metabolism rates. Thus, when a person returns back to the normal diet, they will experience weight gain rapidly. This fluctuation of weight gain and weight loss will further trigger the development of mental eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. In addition, the deficiency of essential vitamins and minerals may also cause many problems such as anemia, osteoporosis, dry skins, dizziness, weakness, etc when one excessively excludes vital vitamins and minerals in his or her diet. Is this what we want while we trying to lose weight? Do we really want to reach our goal while paying off our health?...Probably not. Then, what is the ideal way to lose weight while keeping our body healthy?

The key elements for ideal weight loss are eating less with balanced diets and exercise. This sounds simple, but indeed, it needs motivation to make it happen. How can we achieve the ideal weight without giving up? 1. To have accompanies who support your goal. 2. To start a daily journal that tracking the daily calories and nutrients intake.

However, we all have known that calories in and calories out; weight gain is due to excessive calories intake which allows body to turn it into fats as long term energy source. Therefore, it takes a while to reach our ideal goal; thus, if friends or families willing to help you to keep on track, they will be the best supporters to keep you going. Besides that, another efficient way to reach the desired weight is not only exercise regularly but also have a good balanced diets by keeping track of what you eat, how much you eat, and how you eat in a day (i.e. daily journal). By writing down what you eat not only allows individual becomes aware of calories and nutrients intake per days, but it also let individual to set up an ideal goal for weight loss without sacrificing their favorite desserts, foods and most significantly their health in a long run.

editorial: Alex Nicoletti
(send to northjersey.com)
Alexandra Nicoletti

Dear Editor,

Today, many people in the world are suffering from obesity. Some have decided to take action and get their lives back on track but may lack the knowledge of how to go about losing the weight. It is important to understand that losing weight is not easy and takes much dedication and hard work. There is not just one simple step to lose and maintain the weight that you lose. Diet, exercise, and realization of what foods you are consuming are imperative.

People can use a daily journal to keep track of what they are consuming on a daily basis to enlighten them on their ill eating habits. Then they can take action with changing the food in their pantry and refrigerator and sign up for a gym membership or even exercise at home. Every individual has the right to a long, healthy, and prosperous life. We just have to bring about awareness of how to start the new lifestyle and make it suit that specific individual. Every person must realize that we are all different and one way may work for one individual while it does not work for another.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Nicoletti

Unconscious Eating
Tiffany Wang
(Sent to The Daily Targum)

You are what you eat.

Or, rather, try this on for size: You are *how* you eat.

Mindless eating is, in a nutshell, eating without thinking. With seemingly never-ending projects and work to do that needs to be balanced with extracurriculars and the social experience, life at university can be stressful and fast-paced. Maybe it seems like you're always pressed for time. And, the first things that may be sacrificed to compensate for a busy schedule are sometimes the most important things, such as sleeping and eating.

Sleep is meant to be a time to restore one's body and, I admit, it feels like a luxury much of the time when deadlines are always just around the corner. But, what about eating? As busy students, we grab whatever we can, whenever we can find the time in between classes, work, and meetings, thinking that it is enough that we are eating something. Turns out that what we eat is

not the only thing that matters when it comes to maintaining a healthy weight and body. *How* we eat it is equally as important.

You may think, “Why does it matter?” After all, food is food, right? Why does it matter if I finish it in 5 minutes flat between classes, or if I sit down and eat it in 10 minutes without distraction? Well, apparently, it takes at least 10 minutes for signals to reach your brain that you’re full, sometimes even 20 minutes. Chances are, if you cram food into your body, you’re going to be reaching for more soon afterward because you won’t realize that you’ve had enough. This means that you’ll be taking in extra calories in the form of snacks or just extra portions of food that your body really doesn’t need.

Additionally, oftentimes we eat not because we’re hungry, but because we are bored. Or depressed. Or celebrating. On occasion, it’s okay to indulge; but, it can be a costly habit in terms of the food itself, but also in terms of later health problems that can result as a consequence of frequent excess consumption.

Eating healthy is more than just choosing a variety of foods. It’s making wise choices, giving yourself some leeway to indulge, and how you eat those foods. Do you multi-task when you eat, being distracted by work or the television? Are you relaxed and enjoying the experience of eating, or are you rushed and simply shoveling food in your mouth? By not taking the time to think about the food that you’re eating, by not taking the time to enjoy the experience of eating, by not fostering a healthy relationship with the food that you eat, the only one you’re hurting is yourself. As with anything, moderation is the key for balance. So, next time you’re eating, ask yourself not if you’re full, but if you’re still hungry. And, sit back and enjoy the experience of eating; it can be a luxury, too.