

Guidelines for Journaling

*Barbara Migliaccio, MA, MSW, LCSW, LCADT
Bariatric Surgery Program*



Journaling is a therapeutic tool used by many to make effective changes in their lives. It is a way of better understanding the where, why and how of the things we do. Another way to think about journaling is that you are collecting historical data on yourself. This information can then be used to identify patterns of existing behaviors that create negative eating situations. Once a negative eating situation is recognized, an opportunity for intervention exists.

Here are some thoughts to consider when you start to journal.

1. Be specific.
2. Do not judge anything you write It is all important; it is about you.
3. Do not delete or remove pages.
4. Be as descriptive as necessary.
5. Find your own time for journaling.
 - a. Be flexible or...
 - b. Set aside a specific time each and every day.
6. Journaling is more than a diary, it is about learning to accept and understand you.

The following is a list of possible ideas that can be included in your journal:

1. Your thoughts, dreams and fantasies.
2. Doodles and drawings.
3. Feelings about **significant** daily events that may have occurred.
4. Personal hang-ups and fears.
5. Self-insights (those a ha!! moments)
6. Physical, spiritual and emotional thoughts and actions.

Assess if any of the above journal entries identified situations that encouraged eating or thoughts of eating. Include the day and time of day that you find yourself eating or grazing outside of mealtimes. This may help in identifying areas of possible intervention.

A journal also allows for identifying emotions that encourage eating and a better understanding of what food choices you eat with what emotions.



Try to identify your trigger foods. A trigger food, is a food, once when eaten, encourages you to eat more. Once a trigger food is identified, a decision must be made about that food item. You can be eating or starving yourself today for something you thought about last week. The incident may have actually happened years ago. Professional help in the form of a therapist or dietitian is also available to help in the resolution and identification of these behaviors.

A personal journal is a gift you give yourself. You will better understand the relationship of your emotions and food.

There are numerous avenues available to journal such as the computer, phone, tablet and other electronic devices or you can resort to the composition book and a pen. Date your entries to help you understand what was happening during a specific time of your life.

Take time to relax and enjoy the journaling process!