Last time we outlined how to eat healthier at work by finding quick, healthy options on-site, tips on responding to stress instead of reacting to it and re-thinking traditional workplace celebrations. Overeating at night is troublesome for many, but these strategies can reduce these occurrences.

**#1 Eating balanced during the day:** Skipping breakfast and going long durations between meals, often leads to increased calorie consumption at night, oftentimes more than if you ate during the day. You might be able to mentally power through your hunger during the day, but your body’s drive to survive puts hunger into overdrive at night. In addition, you may (consciously or subconsciously) think that since you’ve been deprived all day that it’s okay to eat bigger portions or higher calorie foods. Avoid this consequence by eating balanced foods, like fruit, vegetables, protein, fat, carbs and calcium foods during the day. This can include a small treat food too. What are examples of balanced eating?

**Lunchtime Selection** (at hospital cafeteria): Don’t be fooled by the title. Look at the calories and choose the soups that are 100-120 calories like the Pasta Fagioli and the packaged Wallstreet Chicken Salad. Buy a 100-cal yogurt and fruit (why? healthy & filling carbs) or to save money, bring from home. Select a sandwich with whole grain bread. Remove the top breading to save 100 cals and replace with veggies from the salad bar, cottage cheese and fruit. Treat yourself to 1 slice veggie pizza, but add a fruit and salad (low-fat dressing) or soup.

**Snack at 3-5pm:** Have fruit or vegetable with string cheese, 1% cottage cheese, 2 wedges Laughing Cow Light or 1 tbsp peanut butter.

**Solution if you’re a “skipper” or “vending machine junkie”:** Slow down and think—“What food can I leave at work?” Frozen meals, bag of baby carrots for the week, containers of 0%-2% Greek yogurt or 1% cottage cheese, hardboiled eggs, package of string cheese, protein bars (try: Quest) or shakes (try: Muscle Milk).

**#2 Slow down the system:** Here are 3 ways that work because they increase mindfulness. **One:** Start by actively breathing deeper on the way home from work or before you leave the office, close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. **Two:** Ask yourself how you’re feeling. Are you hungry, tired, annoyed, sad, overwhelmed, okay? Besides overeating or choosing a high calorie option, what else will help you? **Three:** Think back to what you last ate and drank. Was produce included? What was your water intake? Did you eat lean protein or calcium sources? Then move on to what you need to eat at dinner. Ideally it should contain lean protein, fruit and/or vegetables, whole grains, and small amounts of healthy fat, but at the minimum it should include food groups you didn’t eat earlier.

**#3 Pre-plan and be prepared with quick and tasty options.**

**See Quick & Tasty for ideas.** Chronic feelings of over stress or even feeling under-stressed can lead to salty, sugary and fatty cravings or uncertainty of what to eat. **Experiment** by choosing a balanced dinner meal to overcome these issues. You may be surprised that it works! If you still want crave foods, have it later. Eating crave food while hungry reinforces their appeal, making them harder to resist.

**Yes, You Can!**

While most of us aren't high performance athletes, it doesn't mean that we can't benefit from their practices. **Positive self-talk and imagery** are effective in increasing the amount of effort put forth and decreasing the perceived difficulty while exercising. This can help you by going a little longer or harder in your activity of choice, whether it's the treadmill or even to push yourself to get off a subway stop earlier. Instead of focusing on how tired you feel, reframe the message by encouraging yourself that 5 or 10 minutes of activity is not only possible but definitely doable.

You must be consistent and systematic about positive thinking for it to work. Pick your mantra and repeat often!

**Keep in mind:**

- Think about how to spin activity in a positive light. Those who do it for weight loss usually find it less enjoyable and are less active than those who do it for other reasons. Weight loss can be one reason, but see if you can think of more!
- 10 minute increments of continuous activity are effective in achieving cardiovascular gains. Aim for 2-3 bouts/day if your activity is currently lower.
- If you’re active without desired weight loss, check out the suggestions in this newsletter to increase healthy eating to help you reduce the calories in your diet.

**Quick & Tasty**

- **Freeze it:** Light frozen entrees, frozen veggies (microwave frozen broccoli and add feta cheese or string cheese), frozen fruit (mangos thaw perfectly and fast). You can bring all these to work or if you’re lucky to have an office freezer, can keep your “home away from home” stocked! These options are great for after work too.
- **Baggie it:** Baby carrots, sliced celery or red peppers. Dip in hummus, 1 tbsp nut butter or Laughing Cow Light (self-stable).
- **Bottle it:** Dehydration can lead to sweet cravings. If you’re tired of plain water, try flavored seltzer or add orange slices.
- **Stow it:** Plastic baggies filled with either 24 almonds or cashews, 16 walnuts or ¼ cup pistachios are also a portable and satisfying snack under 200 calories.
- **Indulge it:** 1-2 small squares dark chocolate or 1 sheet graham cracker. Add nut butter or berries. Enjoy with water.

Call us for more information about our weight control group sessions or to schedule an individual appointment with one of our endocrinologists or dietitian.

Columbia University Weight Control Center 212.305.5568 161 Fort Washington Avenue 5th floor Room 512