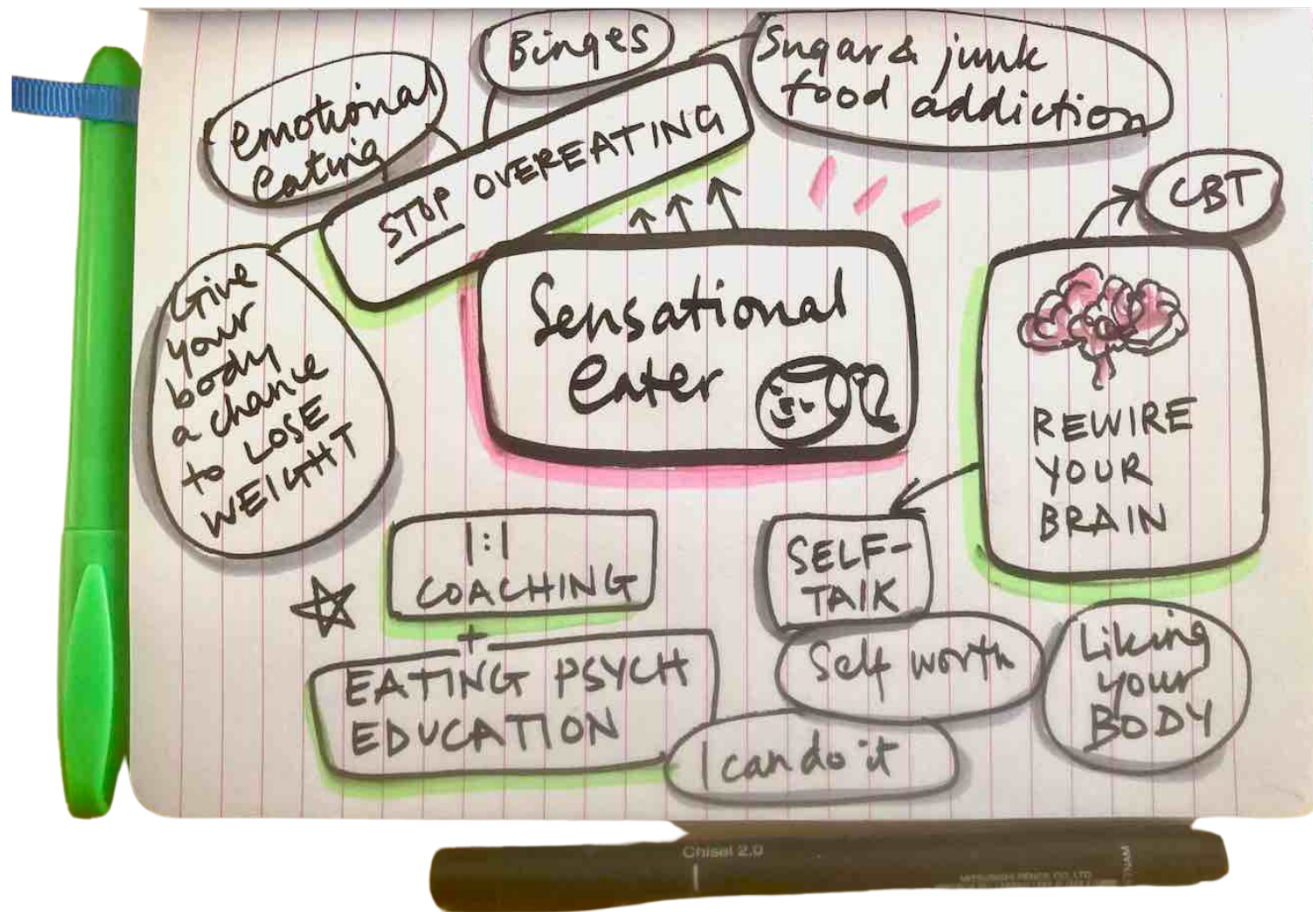


# SENSATIONAL EATER

## Textbook & Workbook

### Module 0: Getting ready for change



## **MODULE 0**

This is no ordinary textbook.

It is a textbook AND a workbook. Each module of the year-long eating psychology programme that I run has a textbook like this, and there are 6 modules altogether.

I want you to abuse the heck out of this document. I want the stains of coffee cups printed on it and lots of exclamation marks and stars scribbled in the big margin I've put on every page.



Grab a **highlighter**, and a **pencil** to write notes and doodle in the margins.



And grab a **pen**, so you can answer the Working Questions as you go. They are your workbook element and they look like this:

\* *Working Question: Have you found the pens and pencils I just mentioned? \_\_\_\_\_.* (<- Write 'YES!')

If you didn't actually write 'YES' then we need to talk already. Your brain has come up with some excuse why it doesn't matter. And learning not to obey the thought "*it doesn't matter*" is crucial. Also, I really really want your YES. Write it like you mean it!

It's inevitable that you'll be tempted to skip the actual writing. You'll think "*I'll just think about the answers and write it down later.*" That's because your intellectual brain will be loving yomping up the new information. It will be loving the dopamine hits of insight and it won't want to change gear.

But to get some traction, to get change, you need to ENGAGE yourself and INVOLVE yourself in the process, not simply consume and hope your cleverness will do all the work. It's very difficult to use your thinking mind to think about thinking. Even that sentence makes me feel confused and muddled, which is how it feels trying to get clarity this way. We live inside our thoughts, we're like a fish in water that doesn't know it is.

So say this out loud:

*I no longer just think about my thinking. I do my thinking on paper.*

Just to reassure you, the working questions are very quick. It takes just a few minutes to do each one before you move on. Well done, you're doing amazingly.

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**CHAPTER 1: Getting ready for change**



### **Imagine becoming a Sensational Eater**

*Really imagine* now what it'd feel like to bring all of your senses into play to support your relationship with food.

Your **physical senses** talking to you...

- Your taste buds alive.
- Your body telling you when it's actually hungry and when it's not.

Your **imagination and anticipation** working ahead of you to give you confidence and skip over obstacles...

- Going into situations with your awareness open and awake, following steps you've rehearsed in your imagination so often it feels like second nature.
- Seeing yourself making wise, kind food choices.

Your **felt sense of being in a body**...

- Having appreciative thoughts about your body and your appearance.

Your **emotions** flowing...

- Feeling your feelings more.
- Letting urges wash through you without reacting.

Your **mindful sense of purpose and existence**...

- Experiencing the present moment, (and your emotional state) without trying to change your state or make the moment more fun or special with treats.

Your **sense of creativity** helping you figure this all out...

- Using your curiosity, creativity and problem-solving faculties instead of self-judgment.

And of course, your **intelligence and smarts**...

- Really understanding how your mind works and why you do what you do.
- Seeing yourself as the authority over your food.

Sound good? Great.

Hello and welcome to the first part of this unique programme.

I'm so excited to lead you through an eating psychology process which is simple, fun to explore, and is going to lighten the load of emotional baggage that you are carrying around food and weight.

The programme is designed so that you learn to stop overeating and relearn eating in a 'normal' way – whatever that is for you (everyone's 'normal' is different!).

- It might be to stop bingeing - we'll cover that.
- It might be to stop grazing or snacking all day while you're working from home.
- It might be to stop stuffing yourself at meals.
- It might be to stop numbing out with take out and screens all evening.
- It might even be to lose weight – Is overeating currently the main factor in your weight? Then that's a genuine possibility.
- It might be to calm the 'food noise' in your head or to feel calm having delicious foods in the house.
- It might be to stop feeling as though *how you ate*, or *how the scale moved* governs whether you had a 'good' or a 'bad' day.



\* Working questions

Grab a pencil and answer these working questions.

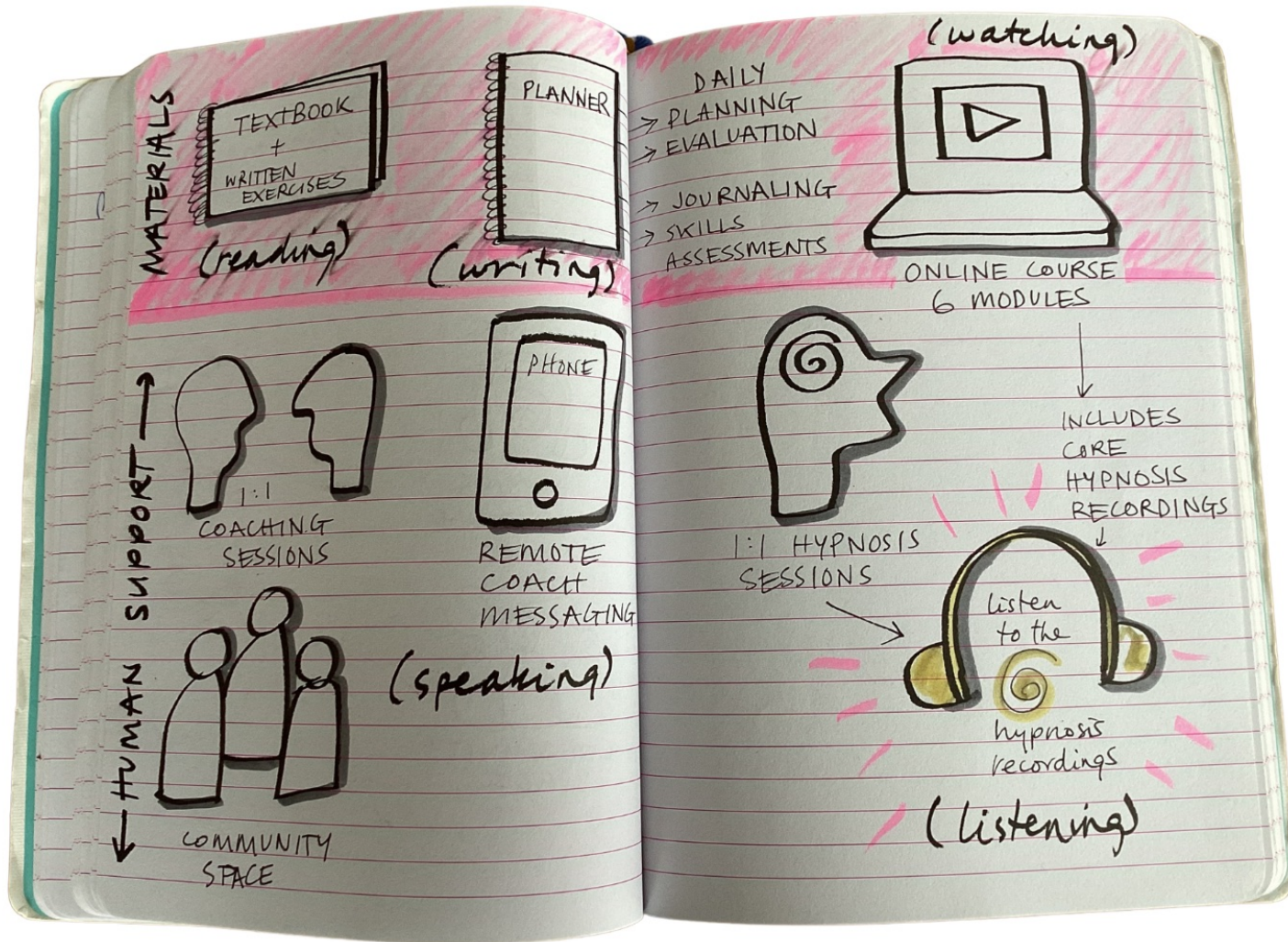
How do you want to describe 'stopping overeating' for yourself? What will you not do?

What do you think normal eating would look like to you?

NB. Be especially kind and non-perfectionist by introducing a few different options for yourself. "It might look like... Or maybe like.... "

Imagine using all your senses, skills and faculties to learn, eat and live differently. Remember a time you solved a problem you had no idea how to solve at the start. What senses, strengths and abilities do you think you have, that can help you? What people and resources do you have?

**There are several components to this programme that work together.**





## **How should I approach studying?**

My suggestion for you is this:

1. 📖 First read each module in **the textbook**, and ✎ answer **the working questions** that come up in the textbook as you go.
2. 🖥️ Then watch the videos connected with that chapter from **the course platform**.
3. 👤 Bring your findings and your problems to your weekly 1:1 coaching sessions.
4. You can also chat to Laura via our remote coach **messaging coaching service**, leaving her video, audio, or text messages between sessions. Some people, depending on their time zone, prefer to do their entire coaching journey this way.
5. 🎧 When you have completed the module in the online platform, listen to **the core hypnosis recording** for that module.
6. 🎧🎧🎧🎧🎧🎧🎧🎧🎧🎧🎧 **Relisten to this core hypnosis recording** at least 10 times before you move on to the next module.
7. 🌀 **Book your hypnosis session** for each module (apart from Module 0). The sessions to choose from are outlined in a hypnosis menu in your online platform, at the end of each module. (It's also important you do the hypnosis prep and share it with Laura, because then we can make your hypnosis as relevant, personal and powerful as possible.) We'll do our hypnosis session live in one of your 1:1 sessions, so you'll need to be somewhere you won't be disturbed, with good internet access. Anywhere you can relax will do: some clients choose their car!
8. 🎧🎧🎧 We'll **record your hypnosis**, so relisten to that several times.
9. 🧩 Complete your module by **completing the section quiz** in your course platform. Quizzes are Open Book (meaning you can look back through the material for the answers). Get 90% to move on.
10. 💡 **Sum up your breakthroughs by** leaving Laura a **video message** in your private message exchange, or in the community area - up to you - summing up what your biggest breakthroughs.

**Go to your online course now.**

By the way, you're doing great.

This is like the first day of going to a big new secondary school, and figuring out where your lessons are can feel overwhelming.

Don't worry, I can always give you a guided tour in our sessions.

Just log in to your online course, and look around the different elements.

The parts that relate go with **Module 0 – Getting Ready for Change** are:

- ▶ **Module 0-Hello! Here's how books, course & coaching fit together**
- ▶ **Welcome – Where to find everything**
- ▶ **Are you bingeing right now – Start here if you're bingeing**
- ▶ **What are self-talk and hypnosis?**
- ▶ **(Includes the core hypnosis for Module 0)**
- ▶ **Self-talk training months – April, August & December**

And you might also want to skip ahead and take a look at

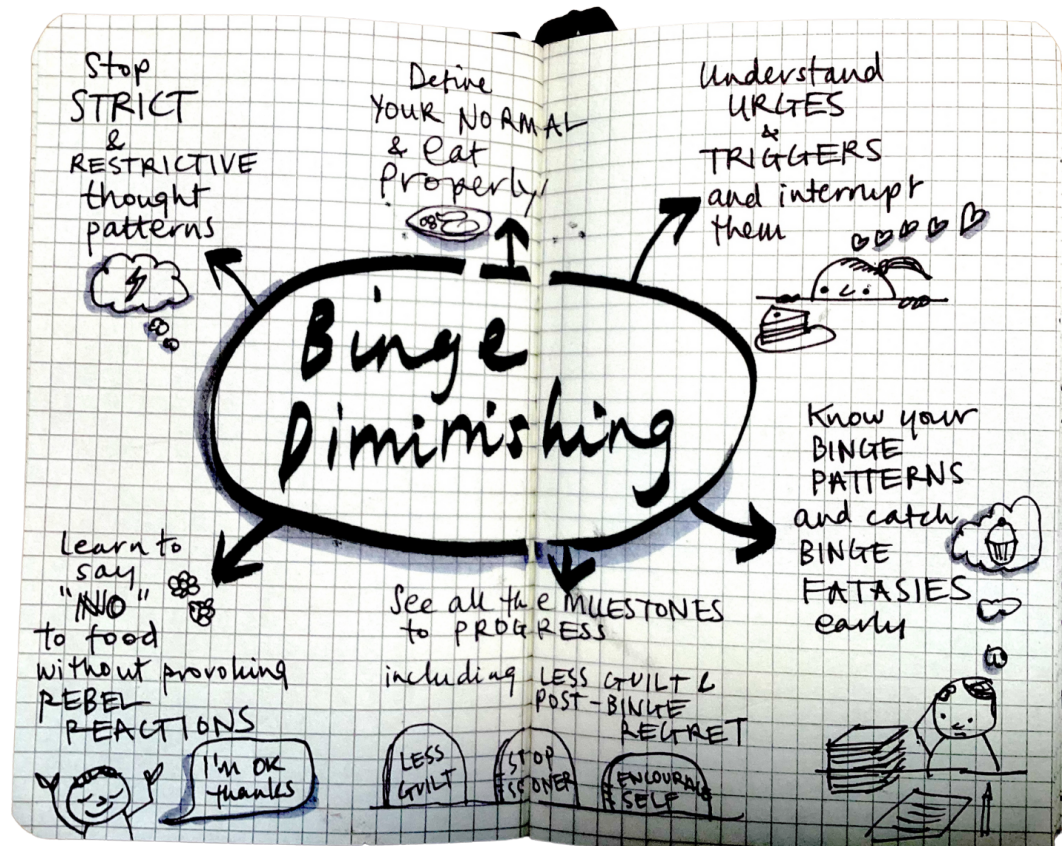
- ▶ **When you're ready to take action – The Sensational Eater Method** (Under Module 4) too.

Now would be a great time to go to your Online Course platform and have a look at both the **Hello!** and then the **Welcome** sections.

The **Hello!** video talks you through all the components of this programme and when to use them.

Book your first 1:1 sessions, and we'll get set up with remote coaching during that session, when we have our phones in our hands.

**Bingeing ?**



Bingeing comes in various forms. It ranges from splurges where you overeat a treat to excess - such as eating one cookie and then finishing the whole packet bit by bit - to binges that you shop for, eat in secret and go 'all out'.

Everything in this process will help with bingeing, but you have a special mini-course in your School of Eating Psychology dashboard called **Binge Diminishing**, and if you are experiencing binges right now, I'd recommend you start there.

The process of Binge Diminishing is a gradual one. You're kind of massaging binge behaviours out of your life, dialling the down until they no longer feature so dramatically.

One day you'll look back and realise "I don't really do that any more."

## **Self-coaching months**

► **There's a section of videos in Module 0 of your online platform, called **Self-Talk Training Months: April, Aug, Dec****

Go watch those videos now, because in the past, holidays have taken us by surprise, and this year I want you to be ready for all the changes in routine that have traditionally derailed our health efforts.

April, August and December are self-coaching months, because these are really tricky months for most eaters. I am on hand to support you flexibly with unlimited use of **remote coach messaging**.

You can no longer afford for your holiday months to be a break from your eating psychology journey, because when you do that you just splurge and then start over.

So instead, you need to figure out how to work flexibly and keep a minimum of awareness going.

These are the months when you need to up your self-talk game to its highest level, because you don't have the pep-talks of 1:1 calls keeping you thinking positively.

Self-coaching months are also how you'll ensure your lifestyle choices are doable for maintenance. It's really important that you build up your self-coaching skills so that you can keep your new way of relating to food even when our coaching has completed.

These months are flexible for several important reasons.

You need time to:

- Accommodate your holidays, so you can relax and replenish yourself.
- Road-test your skills through the disruption of routines by holidays.
- Give yourself the chance to catch up with study you have missed, or apply what you have learned.
- Take a step back and assess your overall progress with a bit of perspective, noticing the quiet little milestones of real progress.
- Really, really practise relaxing and listening to your self-talk and hypnosis.

You are supported by unlimited coaching from Laura during this month in the remote **message coaching platform** we use.



**Simple, easy and fun are the antidote to perfectionism**

If you feel daunted. If you feel overwhelmed. If you feel like you have to do everything and make the most of all the aspects of your eating psychology study – chill.

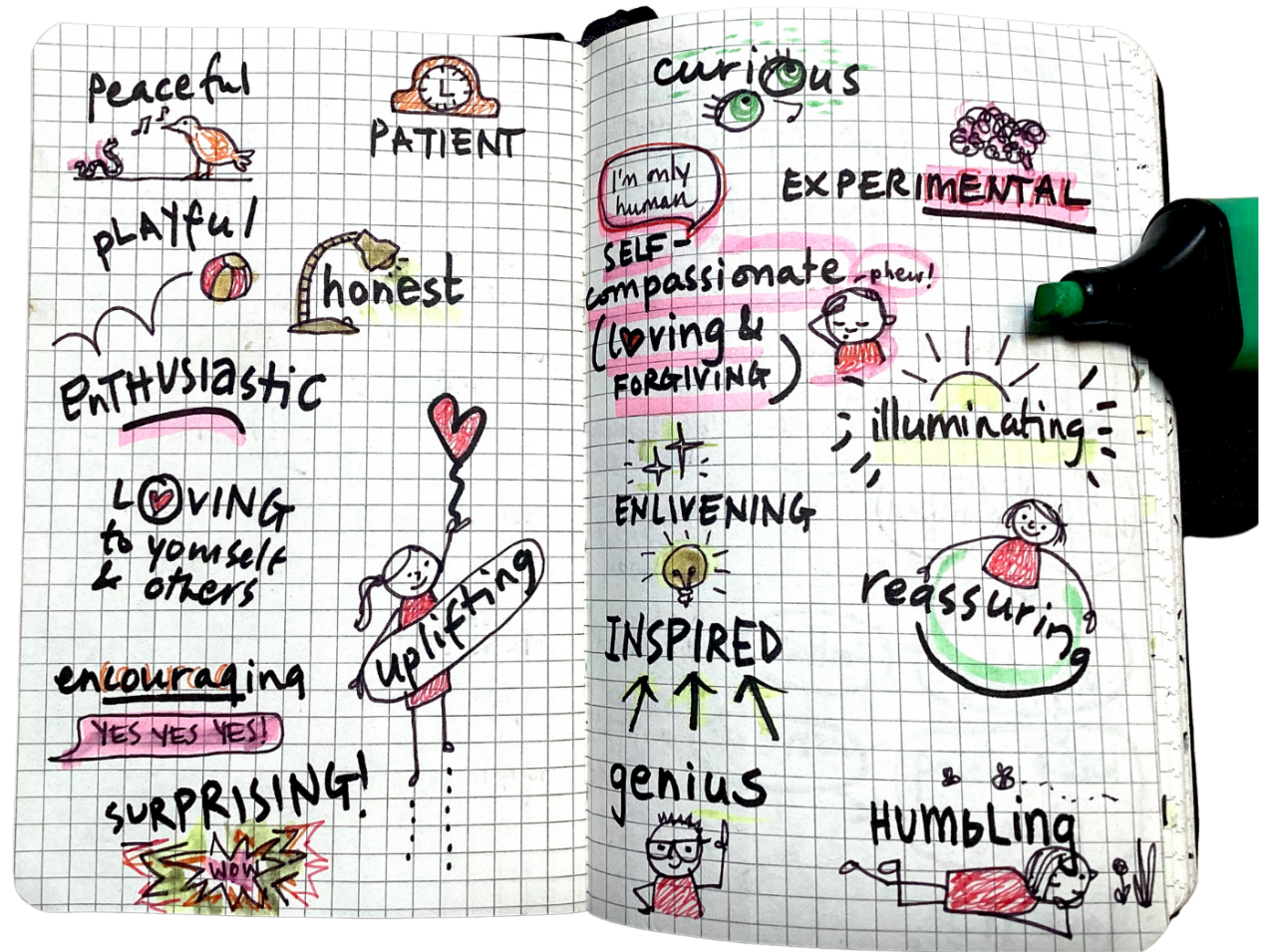
That's just your striving, try-hard, bully brain thinking you have to make maximum effort to get a result. Your brain is just wrong about that.

You're going to love this. I want you to love this. I want it to be fun.

Let go of the idea that working with your eating, your weight or your health has to be punishing. You do not have to suffer.

It is not going to be 'hard' because we'll go at a pace you are entirely capable of handling.

It is not going to be 'hard' because everything you'll do, YOU will willingly choose to do when you're ready.



**Having said that, there are some kinds of discomfort that are absolutely to be expected.**

Not the physical pain where you're exercising so hard that you're hobbling about the next morning.  
Not the willpower pain of starving so hard your stomach feels like it's eating itself.

But good old, you know, *emotional discomfort*. 😬

- Yah, it'll probably be messy. **Progress isn't linear**. You might do great for a while, then get knocked off track by a mayonnaisy conference sandwich. Then find your feet again. It's OK.
- When you tune into her, you might hear **your inner critic** saying some quite mean things about you at first, that you'd rather not hear. But it's better to hear it said to your face than whispered behind your back.
- There can be **grief**: it can be pretty upsetting to think that you've spent so many years locked in destructive patterns, and that there was a solution that nobody told you about back then. And it can be sad to let go of food as your friend, and your struggle as your identity.
- You might feel **impatient**, or frustrated at times, because you'll probably keep doing many of your overeating behaviours while you sort your head out. Remember the most important work to do right now is behind the scenes. And – as I found when I had the kind of baby who cries all day and night – it turns out, when giving up isn't an option, you have reserves of patience inside you you never knew existed.
- You'll **feel your feelings more**. That means, more of the hard, AND more of the good. Can be a bit intense and kind of exposing. Also, when you learn to feel your feelings, you can feel a bit like a crazy toddler at first, expressing things a bit 'all over the place'. It's OK. We're going to grow up.

But. You asked for this, didn't you? You actually want it. You want the longterm gains enough that it's worth it.

You're here because you're sick of checking out. You're sick of numbing.

Everyone around you is waiting for you to get present with them.

Let's do this! Let's wake the fuck up.

Take off the armour. Be vulnerable. Be real.

Learning to feel worthy is a kind of hard that's worth going through.

Now is the perfect time. You weren't ready for this before, and you are now.

Think of it as going through your closet and clearing out all of the things that don't fit or suit you anymore, making some space to get some new stuff that does. Space for a new identity.





**CHAPTER 2: Thinking differently about this program**

### **What's different about an Eating Psychology approach?**

It's a process of removing psychological obstacles that have built up, that are in the way of you having a system for your eating. A system that's pretty simple, clean and straightforward, and that you want to keep doing for the rest of your life.

'Psychological obstacles' is a fancy name for the mysterious, perverse reasons we give up, stop taking action, fuck it up when it's going imperfectly, and make ourselves feel horrendous about our eating.

Cos let's face it: What we're asking of ourselves should be simple: Eating when our body is hungry, not eating when we don't actually need to. Choosing decent food for ourselves. Move a bit.

There are likely some people in your life who make it look simple, and easy too! (My husband 'just does it' – it looks miraculous from where I'm standing!)

Why is it easy for them and not so easy for us overeaters?

It might surprise you to hear that's actually not a rhetorical question: I'm about to explain an *actual reason* it's harder for you.

It's because that person doesn't have your mental blocks – the ones you've built up through your history as a try-and-try-again eater. (It might be worth gently explaining this to your partner/friend/mother, if they keep giving you advice that suits *them* and making it sound ridiculously easy.)

You can probably also think of some others in your life who also struggle with food in their own way. They have a blocks of their own and get stuck in their own patterns. It's more common than not, especially if you've been socialised as a woman. So although your eating patterns are unique to you, you are not alone.

And also, you can respect that everyone is on their own journey and you are ready for things they aren't yet.

In this chapter, we'll already start removing blocks and you'll start switching over to eating psychology, like a train seamlessly switching to another track.

In this chapter, the blocks we are working on removing will be:

- Disbelief that a lifelong solution is possible.
- Hopelessness and the sense that you are personally broken.
- Approaching this programme with diet-ish expectations.

**\* Grab a pencil and answer these working questions:**

Write down all your questions about doing a new programme or trying this new approach.

Write down all the doubts and worries you have about it.

Write down all your doubts about your own ability to complete it.

What are your hopes for the programme?

What do you expect the next step will be?

Do you think you can make lifelong changes to how you eat? Why or why not?

Why might you get discouraged or want to stop doing the programme and not continue?

Many of these doubts, opinions and expectations (of ourselves, of the coaching journey, and of our ability) are unhelpful mental blocks. If you have found a bunch – great! Flushing them out is what we're here to do.

Sensational Eater | *Textbook: Module 0 – Getting ready for change*

It's amazing – but not surprising – that we have so many blocks BEFORE we even tried anything at all!!

Let's look at ten expectations we'll release before we begin. We might stop on the way to write a few things down.

**Expectation to release #1: I'll try this programme, and if it doesn't work, I'll try another thing.**

Let me share something with you: I invested in Noom app for 12 months, and used it for 3 weeks and 2 days. (By comparison to other diets, that was actually a Personal Best).

You have also made many attempts.

You've essentially half-tried to climb many mountains.

Every time, you get partway and the going gets tough, or you stumble and hurt yourself. Then you stop. You think "I don't like this mountain. This one is too hard. I'm disappointed that I don't feel able to do it. I don't believe I'll ever get to the top of this one."

So you come back down that mountain and start climbing another one.

This programme is not a mountain. There is no summit. You become a Sensational Eater, a person who eats with all their senses engaged. Eating psychology becomes the way you approach this part of your life. You change as a person. This is a journey through the mountains and beyond.

Eating psychology is not 'something you try', because unlike a diet, it's not something you stick to, and then start a different one if "it" doesn't work.

Eating psychology is a way of seeing and understanding what's driving your behaviours, and that changes the way you do things. You stop trying to force yourself, and put more energy into getting your brain on board with your overall desires.

Most of the work is on your mind, then we do some action as a last move. When it's action time, I'll help you chose action steps you're in love with and want to keep doing forever.

With eating psychology, when you find yourself behaving differently to how you'd like, I'll help you figure out what's going on in your mind, and then you'll experiment until you solve it, and you'll keep going.

Because I know, and you know deep down, that if there's a problem in *how you eat*, there's an underlying problem we need to uncover in *how you think and feel about yourself*.

Understanding your eating psychology is an ongoing learning process. This is so cool. Because this way, there is literally no possibility of failure. You'll just keep course-correcting.

Sound good?

**Expectation to release #2: I'm going to finally become a perfectly mindful eater!**

From where I am now, I can tell you: It *is* good not being a binge eater any more.

I also used to eat emotionally, and I have struggled with 20lb up and down, especially through the menopause transition.

Now, I often find it easy to often say “no” to urges to snack, without provoking a binge backlash. And I love having my miraculous body and enjoy giving it plenty of support and exercise too, and wearing clothes that fit my body and look cool.

But.

Yes, there is a ‘but’.

Honestly? I’m still only an average 7/10 as an eater. And my body shows it.

It’s OK. I have to remember, in my binge eating and bulimic teens, I was about a 2/10 with my eating. I’ve come a long way.

7/10 isn’t what I wanted when I started, but it *is* my Normal. And what’s even better is that I have drawn a line under trying forcefully to perfect it. My eating is better than ever before, I enjoy sports more than ever before, and I’m free from struggling with it.

I trust that the more I manage my emotional life, the more calm my eating will be. I’d rather spend my time lifting weights, walking the clifftops here in Cornwall, showing up present and imperfect with my family, and learning about climate change.

Before you throw your toys out the pram at the idea of being a mere average 7/10 eater (which is basically letting your perfectionist brain pooh pooh it), just imagine what creates that average.

Maybe some days I’m a 9/10. That feels amazing.

Maybe some days I’m a 6/10. It happens. I can get curious about what went haywire, and easily course-correct.

7/10 is normal for me, because I had an eating disorder.

Trying to become perfect was killing my life.

So let me ask you: Wouldn’t you like to *be normal* around food?

A normal weight?

**Expectation to release #3: I need results quickly.**

What if you don't?

What if the result of dealing with your eating struggle *permanently* is so valuable to you, that you are willing to go as fast as the slowest part of you?

A client said to me recently (in a moment of panic): “I need to see some weight loss or I can't stay motivated”. She'd slipped back into an old focus on weight loss for a minute.

I told her that the panic she was feeling is the exact reason focusing on weight loss is problematic: She ignores all the other milestones that her eating is getting more normal, or that she's starting to make better decisions.

She was doing so much for herself – Foregoing shop-bought cake in the work kitchen, going to pilates twice a week and yoga once a week, and not eating emotionally through a change of jobs, learning a new computer software, and her mother's last days.

Not recognising all those wins along the way is a bit like deciding not to love your children until they get a college degree. If that outcome were your only way of knowing you were doing good, you'd miss enjoying their wonderful childhood! AND you'd miss witnessing how it's precisely your love for them along the way that grows them up enough to get a degree anyway!

(The same applies here: it's your love for yourself along the way that grows you up enough to be able to keep consistent in the lifestyle choices that add up and might eventually create the change in body composition you're after).

If you want a short-term result, you're in the wrong place. If you want to do something that's not-normal to lose weight, and hope to become a normal eater later once you've got thinner, you're setting yourself up for another fail.

When we rearrange the priorities to becoming normal and solving the problems of overeating permanently – I mean the real underlying problems of **emotional avoidance, low self-worth, bullying self-talk, unrealistic expectations, victim thinking** – we see that developing life and emotional intelligence skills, and loving yourself fiercely along the way, is much more valuable than agitating the scale to move by 'cheat' means.

**\*Working writing: You were not put on this planet to worry about your thighs. The world needs your attention.**

I want to share this lifelong, sustainable approach for one reason: So that you will finally deal with your food struggle *and draw a line under it.*

Yes, I said it, and it's not a lofty promise. Let's do it once, do it right.

Completely Put. It. To. Bed.  
Wow. Imagine that!

Make that your top priority now. An even bigger priority than looking good in a bathing suit on your next Summer holiday, or any other shorter-term vision.

Take a moment now to really fill yourself with desire and longing to resolve this, and make finding a long-term solution more important than anything else. Imagine the peace of it. Imagine the liberty.

You're about to make a decision. An important decision about priorities, values and how you want to live. Decisions are choices. They are where all of our power is. Choices shape our lives.

Know that when you make any choice, it's a trade-off: *I choose this, not that.*

So here's the truth. You can't have a long-term solution AND a short-term fix. You're going to have to kill short-termism.

**\* Your turn to write:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will do what it takes to completely put my eating struggle to bed.

*Signed:*



**Expectation to release #4: I feel good about this. Let me start taking action while I'm fired up! Let's set some goals!**

Down, girl!

There will be a time for action.

And that time (unless by 'action' you mean journaling, and listening to delicious, relaxing hypnosis recordings), is *later*.

Yes, we'll do things in an order.

Doing things in this will help you make what I call The Eating Psychology Switch.

The eating psychology switch has two elements, and one lays the foundation for the other:

1. **A mindset** – getting the right attitude and the right self-talk. (Modules 1-3 of this programme cover this and guess what? *It's already happening to you right now!!* Exciting, right?).
2. **A system** – or rather, a set of self-chosen practical systems for shopping, prepping, eating, exercising, and handling social scenarios that you can use (and adapt) for the rest of your life. (**Module 4 – Action** and the **Quickstart to Planning** cover this).

So, so long as you stay in this programme, you will never need to Google 'intermittent fasting routines for menopausal women', or 'keto desserts without peanut butter', or click on weird BuzzFeed adverts that promise to show you scary shit about eating bananas causing you some kind of freaky mineral overload. It might do. I don't know.

Instead of all that BS, you'll have a simple system you invented yourself, and nothing mentally or practically stopping you consistently implementing it.

Doesn't that sound like a sustainable approach?

Can you see how we can deal with this once and for all?

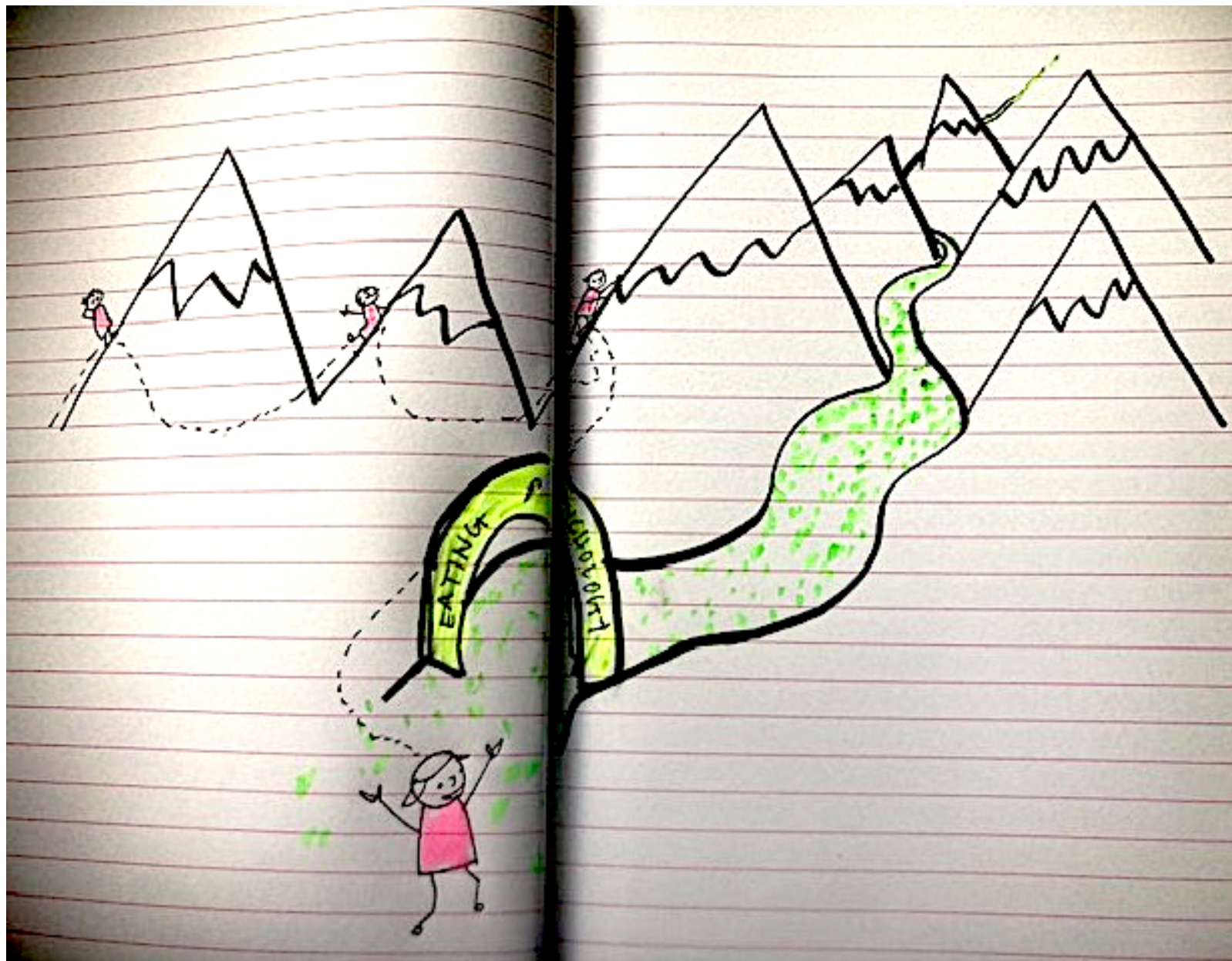
Ahh, honey. Just to know. Your brain will have a tantrum about taking your time on the psychology part. It wants weight loss. Its wants relief from bingeing. But trust me, you need to learn skills you are missing. You need to get rid of all the ways you sabotage yourself.

**Working writing:**

\* Write down some patient thoughts to tell yourself.

Prompt: If you need inspiration, think about how you would kindly talk to a child who wanted to skip to mixing a cake, without weighing out all the ingredients and reading the recipe properly?

These sentences may be very simple or short. That's good actually. Close your eyes, see if you can remember them.



**Expectation to release #5: If I'm overweight, it's because I overeat.**

We, as individuals, have *partial influence* over our weight.

Yes, we have (you'll discover), 100% control over the action of lifting food into our mouths, and that's where the action is for some of us, but it's not the whole story. Although there's a lot of excitement about "healthy lifestyle", some experts estimate that our actions only account for about one third of the total result when it comes to weight<sup>1</sup>.

Our bodies are organisms, not machines. I think of this a little like parenting a toddler. I must parent her, and I do everything I can to influence her positively. But I can't *control* her. Ultimately, she's her own person, and I have to hand her personhood over to her. Your body is its own animal.

Genes, hormones, how often we have lost-and-regained our weight, whether we binged a long time, other health issues, how sedentary we are, our time of life, our environments, lifestyle factors like how much we sleep – these all also play a part in our weight. Weight is so complex that us humans still only partially understand it. New drug development - you've probably heard about Ozempic, Mounjaro etc – are changing our view on appetite too. We know things in our environment – like BPAs in plastics or air pollution – might be causing a population-wide rise in weight. There's actually a lot that's out of your control!

My favourite approach to this is to stay light, experimental and curious, looking for where I *do* have influence.

*"Let me see what happens if I do a bit more of this and a bit less of this..."*

Let me tell you a quick story: One friend, an intuitive eating coach herself, had learned to eat normally, but had given up hope of ever losing weight. She had actually accepted that, and was at peace with it. Then, one year, she gave up drinking – she just wanted to be free from the dependency. And her body dropped two stone.

So together, we are here to change the one part we can control, and that's causing us the most psychological pain: to stop overeating and stop struggling with our eating. That's low-hanging fruit, and we're going to pick it and see.

We're going to find a new way, going back to our bodies, becoming Sensational Eaters. For many people, that does create weight loss. Take my client Karen, for example, who quieted a lifelong binge eating compulsion and, on the Sensational Eater programme – over 12 months – lost "the guts of 2 stone" and kept it off.

You can only try sensible things – things you're willing and happy to try – and see what your weight does. Your body will show you.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example this report from Harvard Medical School, 'Why people become overweight'.  
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/why-people-become-overweight>

**Expectation to release #6: I can work hard now, solve my weight, then never think about it again.**

I said we're doing this once, and doing it right.

But how can we deal with weight 'once' when we eat every day of our life, and our weight and health situation will inevitably fluctuate over a lifetime?

I know: I said I was giving you a "one and done" solution. 'Done' doesn't mean you'll attain a 'goal' weight you picked off a menu, (or unwavering love for yourself), and then be able to go unconscious around food and stop managing your mind forever.

Here's what 'done' means: *'Done' means you have ONE CHOSEN APPROACH, for life.*

Let me give you an analogy: Like the laundry, eating isn't ever 'done'.

Our weight will fluctuate in our lives. Our emotional eating will have ups and downs: Events will spark the urge to comfort ourselves with food again. How we shop/cook/feed ourselves/move are all going to adapt to deadlines, promotions, parenting crises, babies, school holidays, travel, times of the month, career change, loss, health complications.

So, like with the laundry, 'getting it done' would only ever be, at best, a *for now* measure.

"Let me deal with the laundry", I'd think. Then I'd spend all of Saturday with buckets of straight-out-the-tumbler pjs tipped out on my bed into a huge mixed heap of pants, towels, uniform and leggings that I christened Mount Washmore. I just wanted to finally glimpse the bottom of laundry tubs and have the temporary relief of *done*.

By Tuesday, I'd see the washing piling up again and think "Uhh. Washing *again*?? I'm so *over* washing. I don't have time for this. I'll think about it at the weekend".

Until I realised! Unless I create a washing *system*, I'm going to have to dig myself out the trenches every Saturday.

Which is what dieting's like. You make a short-term sacrifice so your weight is how you want it to be, temporarily. Then it creeps up, and you have to diet again.

We're putting a stop to that. We're creating the 'run the washing machine every day' approach to weight and health, over here!



**\* Working writing: It's time for your second key agreement with yourself:**

*I will never take on a new eating behaviour I'm not willing to do forever.*

I mean, sure, we might do a few fullness exercises as a one-off to get some extra awareness. I might ask you to eat **one** meal extra-specially slowly to taste every bite, for example – I don't expect you to do that forever.

I'm talking about new eating, shopping, prep, and exercise habits. And the foods you choose.

So you want your future to contain birthday cake, you need to build that in sensibly, not give it up right now.

This also means you can't go on an exercise boot camp to get thin, if it'll put you off running for the rest of your life.

Make that contract with yourself now. Sign it here:

*I \_\_\_\_\_, will never take on a new habit to fast-track a change in my weight, that I don't want to do forever.*

*Signed:*

**Expectation to release #7: An expert needs to show me the system.**

That's right, Chickpea: You don't need a *solution*. You need a *system*.

*Expert: "Here's the workout plan, here's the shopping plan, here's the meal plan."*

*You: "Wait – lunges give me knee pain! Your shops have different food to mine! I work shifts, I don't eat a cooked meal after! I find chickpeas indigestible! I'm Nigerian and can't tolerate lactose!"*

*Expert: "Sheesh. I give you the perfect plan, and you still can't do it!"*

Let me tell you: I tried someone else's 'gut healing' and pilates challenge recently. It included nice new recipes. They alternated between chia pudding and linseed soak for breakfast. Then it hit me: they like chia pudding so much more than me! If you've never tried it, it's a bit frogspawny. Kind of nice while also gagging a bit, y'know? They also like pilates more than me. I prefer yoga. That's *their* system. They don't know what *I* like. I faltered on the challenge, because I stopped enjoying it.

Another example is, during the Summer Holidays, I got a Hello Fresh box to try. It's a cooking kit where they send you the portioned ingredients, and a recipe card, so you cook 'easily' like you're on a cookery programme on TV. The problem is, one of my kids is a selective eater, and two of my kids are vegetarian, so I had to create alternative meals and variations. I realised, Hello Fresh is trying to make my life easy, but they can't. Nobody can make a family meal plan better than me, because I'm the only one who knows my kids.

(Actually, that's not true: someone can make a meal plan better than me: my kids. I got them to do it. Such a relief!)

Other people's systems aren't right for you. Doesn't matter how expert they are. You are the expert on your life, you are the one getting feedback from your body, and you are the authority on your eating. Your body is yours alone.

So. What we're going to do here is different. You'll use the Sensational Eater Method to guide you in choosing and road testing the elements of your OWN system.

You are used to buying plans. But what you have bought here is different. What you have bought here, is *training in making decisions around food*.

I know, you don't trust yourself right now. And I know, your brain will tell you that's overwhelming, or too much work. That's why I'll guide you *decision by decision*.



**But if I create the system, it won't work, because I don't know what the right system is.**

You're right. Your Sensational Eater System probably won't work at first. Nobody invents the perfect thing first time. Question is, are you gonna quit, or refine your system?

The first car ever invented didn't look like the one we have today. They evolved the design.

What we're going to do is, we'll road test your system against real life hurdles, and then improve upon it.

Real life hurdles are things like Fridays. And Mondays. And birthdays. And days when you have a period. There are actually as many hurdles as 'good days'. A 'perfect day' system won't cut it. We need a tough, robust, flexible, highly responsive system.

The more you do your one system, the more it'll become an integral and treasured part of your life.

Can you imagine that? Working your system, where you're enjoyably engaged with your eating, movement and health. Something that feels right, like going to bed having brushed your teeth?

The only way to integrate a habit this deeply is by putting it into action, and then course-correcting every time you're derailed. Course-correction means checking your emotional motivation, making your actions easier or more realistic, or more appealing.

You will get derailed. Of course you will! But as long as you're in this programme, you won't abandon your system. That's the law around here. As a coach, I'm here to help you be resilient and adaptable by teaching you this new learning style.

Evaluation and course-correction is how businesses boom and innovations evolve.

We are making the eating psychology switch, and that means learning to stay *on the journey*.

This will FEEL different from a diet. Less exciting! Because being given someone else's system has given you hope, novelty, inspiration in the past. They probably made it sound very simple with some simple rules to follow. They probably have a nice body in their Instagram photos. You trusted them and thought "I can do this!".

But that hope wore off. The best system is the one you can actually do, not one the 'perfect plan' you can't stick to.

It's one that fills you with inspiration, not fear.

It's probably not very fancy but you can uplevel it as you go. One client started on supermarket ready meals and gradually added packet salad and pre-chopped fruit. That was realistic and better than buying meat pies at the bakery. You ain't gonna find a sexy Instagrammer promoting that diet!

□ **Trapdoor: Eager to create a system right now?**

Sure, you can start creating and road testing your system at any point by skipping to **Module 4 – Actions** or watching the **Quickstart section** that goes with your planner.

You could start with a post-it note plan, but if you're just itchy to get to work in some way, why not wait a hot minute and we'll look at Groundwork in Module 4 – a much more valuable place to start to take action.

Groundwork will get you taking action on the fundamentals of your metabolism, like sleep and staying hydrated. It's not very sexy but it's an easy way to make massive strides, and it bloody works.



**Expectation to release #8: I'm too lazy.**

*"I do not think laziness exists. You know what does exist? Executive dysfunction, procrastination, feeling overwhelmed, perfectionism, trauma, amotivation, chronic pain, energy fatigue, depression, lack of skills, lack of support, and differing priorities." — K.C. Davis, How to Keep House While Drowning: A Gentle Approach to Cleaning and Organizing*

There may be times where you encounter resistance to doing this programme. You'll know you're in resistance because you're not taking action.

*Inaction is a form of action* that results from how we're feeling. Overwhelmed. Dull and dutiful. Rebellious. Scared to come to live calls because we haven't done our homework and judge ourselves as being 'behind'. Tired, because we are doing the programme with a spirit of striving, or have-to.

See how resistance is trying to tell you something, and showing up our striving, perfectionistic patterns and how they get in our way?

We overeaters are experts at disengaging. Any discomfort – even the internal discomfort of unconscious self-judgment or too-stringent self-expectations can send us into our withdrawal patterns.

You withdraw into eating, in secret, in private, numb in safety. You go unconscious.

You don't do the work, don't watch videos, (or ONLY consume the information, don't attempt to apply any of it)... thus ensuring that you shoot yourself in the foot.

'Shooting yourself in the foot' was something soldiers in the first world war did, who didn't want to go over the top of the trenches into open fire. They wanted to be sent to hospital rather than risk death. It was called 'malingering' and was punishable if you were found to be doing it. I did this a lot. Not with bullets - spaghetti was my weapon of choice! Incapacitating ourselves.

Disengaging from the programme – and not bringing the fact you're disengaging to coaching– is pretty much the only way you can fail.

The reason this happens is that we judge ourselves for disengaging.

Do you ever have it where you haven't got in touch with an old friend for ages, you missed their birthday, and you feel so sheepish that you then continue to not get in touch, instead of breaking the ice again?

Every form of failure can be transmuted into valuable learning, but only if you get coached on it.

You don't need *a solution.*

You need  
*a system.*



**\* Working writing: Wise to our own self-sabotage.**

Disengaging isn't the only way we sabotage ourselves.

You know yourself pretty well by now.

Think of a couple of other things you have started, but not finished. Courses you have bought, but never even logged into. Projects you were going great guns on, then flaked out on.

Notice that a lot of self-judgment, guilt etc comes up, and you can quickly start to think "I'm a person who...doesn't follow through", and other mean self-judgments. Notice your brain having opinions about that. OK. There's judgment.

But now let's be curious, just about one of the examples you thought of.

What happened? What happened in your thinking, in your self-opinion? What stopped you?

Write down the ways you usually sabotage yourself.

Knowing that, what will you do this time, when this tendency surfaces?

**Expectation to release #9. I can't do it, I know I'll fail.**

I know you can do it.

You can do something you have never done before: *stopped struggling with food permanently. That's a new thing.* The 'permanently' part is new, and different: it shifts your priorities around entirely.

I believe in you 100%.

If you don't believe in you to do it, that's normal!

The brain's function is primarily protective. It looks to the past to try to predict dangers and disappointments in the future, so it can steer you away from them before you get near.

So your brain forages around in your past looking for evidence of this new experience, but there's no precedent for it. The past is a very shit predictor of the future, but sadly it's all your brain has got to go on.

Instead, think of something you did in your life, that you had never done before. Going to a new country on holiday. Starting a new school or job. We have done new things, outside of our past experience.

For instance, when I had a baby, I had no clue what I was doing, and had to figure it out 'on the job'. It was a messy process, and it didn't feel like rainbows and daisies, but it worked out OK!

You'll have to believe that it's possible and that you'll figure it out anyway.

*"I'm willing to believe it's possible to stop struggling with food permanently."*

*"I'm working on believing it's possible to stop struggling with food permanently."*

*"I'm open to the idea that it's possible to stop struggling with food permanently."*

*"It must be possible to stop struggling with food permanently, because some people have done it. I'm learning to become one of those people."*


*"I'm going to stop struggling with food permanently. That's my goal and I'm sticking to it."*

Do you see how you can acclimatise yourself into a new belief, kind of hopping on stepping-stones until you get there?

The thing is, you're here reading this. What's keeping you here? The teensy part of you that wants to believe in possibility.

**\* Working writing.**

.....% of me is despairing and disappointed. And \_\_\_\_% of me wants to believe this is possible for me.

 Did you put *any number* in the 'wants to believe' part? Let's go with that. You are not dead. There's light in the old girl yet!


Look at you, coming here with a history of struggling with this stuff, and YET you are STILL showing up to a new programme and a new approach!!! So you are an absolute warrior.

I also believe in you because I struggled with overeating in a way that dogged and dominated every living day of my life.

And if I can stop struggling and start loving myself (and I do most days), so can you. I didn't think I could, many times. I hit wall after wall of hating myself and despairing, and I still broke through.

- First binge eating in my teens and early twenties.
- And then systematic emotional overeating: dealing with my emotions through food after work when I had an office job.
- And then indulging in unconscious, constant procrastinator grazing while working from home and coping with menopause, parenting, sleeplessness and having my own business.

In the last decade I have worked as an eating psychology coach, I have helped hundreds of clients heal their relationship with food. I promise you, they were like you.

 **Go to the online programme. It's time to listen to the Belief hypnosis. This is the Core Hypnosis recording for Module 0. Listen to it at least 10 times over the coming days.**



**Expectation to release #10: I won't have time to study this – to the standard I'd like.**

Take your time.

Any work you do in between coaching sessions is going to be hugely, hugely valuable to you. Like:

- Doing a page of the guided journal/planner I give you.
- Doing a worksheet.
- Answering the Working Questions I ask right here in the textbook before you move on.
- Listening to a hypnosis recording.

Every little bit of attention you pay yourself adds up.

You see, certain attitudes are associated with overeating – I have those tendencies too.

I'm talking about perfectionism. (Which you may not recognise as perfectionism!) Impulsivity and people pleasing also show up – we'll work on them later too.

With that perfectionism probably comes a history of being a good student, trying to do things 'right', and believing that you have to do things exhaustively to get the benefit.

Some of us also have a 'I have to consume every morsel to get my money's worth' mentality in restaurants that can apply to study courses too!

Insight is addictive: it'll be tempting for some of us to over consume the intellectual component.

It doesn't work like that. When you have a breakthrough, however small, stop. Love on that. Treasure it. Revisit it. Use it as fuel for as long as you can until you can.

So right off the bat, let's agree this: *Whatever you learn, at whatever pace you can realistically apply it to your life, is exactly what you need and entirely sufficient to make the absolute, once-in-a-lifetime change and free up your energy for more impactful work in the world.*

Also, you don't have to reach perfect standards to see results. You just have to look out for the improvements!

Some people lose a lot of weight, still overeating somewhat. Some people feel a helluva lot better, even when they are still bingeing somewhat. Some people eat convenience food, and still make huge strides.

**There are two very fun, low-effort actions you can do by yourself throughout this programme.**

(I urge you to fall in love with them and do them with a spirit of luxurious self-nurturing):

1. **Listen to the hypnosis and self-talk recordings** while you relax, walk, do housework... Listen to the 4-minute versions every time you go pee. Take a 4-minute break after every 50 minutes of work you do, and listen. Listen to them daily. Listen to them at least 10 times each before you move on to the next one.
2. **Take time to be with yourself, and jot things down.** Take a few notes in your planner/workbook. This helps you find new thoughts to think, and writing them down helps you rote learn them. Make your planner messy and 'used'. It can look as incomprehensible as a mad scientist's blueprint to crack a code. It's a workbook.

Whenever your inner perfectionist tells you to 'try harder' and 'do more', remember:

*I have this programme for life.*

*Doing 'the minimum' (instead of always 'doing my best') is outside my comfort zone but it's a valuable new experience for me.*

*I can come back to this resource, if ever I need more.*

*Small actions matter: the difference between something and nothing is a quantum leap.*

*The most important thing is not the quantity of work, but the direction I'm moving in.*

*My brain's neural pathways are changing with every conversation with my coach and every conversation with myself.*

*I only need to learn one thing from today, and apply it.*

**CHAPTER 3: HYPNOSIS FOR DEEPER HABIT CHANGE**

### **What is hypnosis?**

In this programme I talk about hypnosis and self-talk. In case you're wondering, here's the difference:-

Hypnosis spends a little bit of time deepening your relaxation at the start, before you start taking in some helpful thoughts. Self-talk doesn't bother with that.

That's the only difference! The bit at the start! It's called 'induction'. The reason for this is relaxation part of hypnosis is that if you get a bit more daydreamy than usual, you can let yourself have the real feelings in your body.

Belief is a felt experience. Something in you moves, your heart lifts, you feel inspired or enabled. Without hypnosis, sometimes we don't believe new thoughts even though we can see they'd be helpful.

You're using your imagination to get under the radar of your protective, cautious, safety-seeking, risk-averse, emotionally avoidant, scaredy-cat conscious mind that says "that's not true" or "that might be the case for others but it's not possible for you".

Sometimes we talk about this like sneaking past the bouncer on the door of a nightclub, so we can go inside and have a good time instead of shivering outside in the cold night air.

You're using the same skills as you would for relaxation or meditation. When we relax, our brain waves do change<sup>2</sup> – but there's no evidence that this is a separate state called a 'trance'. We're using concentration and relaxation together, instead of the effortful buzzed-up concentration we sometimes use to complete a task.

In your online platform, there are a series of short videos that talk you through exactly what evidence shows us that hypnosis is. Go check them out now and have all your questions answered.

Towards the end of each module, you'll get to a part of the online programme that tells you to schedule a hypnosis session, and you'll choose a session from the '**hypnosis menu**' – look for this in your online course then ask Laura for the session of your choice complete that module.

In the hypnosis menu are also instructions on how to prep for that session – unique to each session – by finding beliefs and imagery that you really want to teach your brain to enjoy. Do this prep, so your session can be really tailored to YOU.

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<sup>2</sup> Large effects of brief meditation intervention on EEG spectra in meditation novices, P. Stapleton,<sup>a,\*</sup> J. Dispenza,<sup>b</sup> S. McGill,<sup>c</sup> D. Sabot,<sup>a</sup> M. Peach,<sup>d</sup> and D. Raynora, 2020, National Library of Medicine <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7649620/>

### **What is self-talk?**

Self-talk is like hypnosis without the relaxation part.

Instead of trying to employ the unconscious mind, it's consciously retraining the words of the voice in your head through sheer familiarity, like listening to pop songs that just worm their way into your brain when they get played over and over on the radio.

Ultimately, repeated information does end up in your unconscious. So if hypnosis isn't for you, try self-talk!

For example, last week I took my computer to a hotel to work. They were playing Christmas tunes all day. In the night, I woke up, and my brain sang "I wish it could be Christmas every dayyyyyy". This was not conscious. If I could have decided to not sing that, I sure would have! But it's a good illustration of how powerfully simple repeating things is! Your brain picks it up, just like it picked up your parents' turns of phrase when you were a kid.

Self-talk is the same as using affirmations, but affirmations are sometimes spiritual or aspirational: we are really just looking for humdrum but helpful new instructions for your brain.

We just want to learn some useful thoughts, through repetition, like learning lines for a play.

Listening to helpful thoughts in audio form gives your neural networks cognitive rehearsal and repetition, which is just like we learned language originally. Speaking them out loud, reading them, and writing them, are also options.

We'll go HAM on self-talk during self-coaching months!

When you study Level 2 of this programme with me, you also get access to daily self-talk and hypnosis meditations. The recordings are 4 minutes daily, or you can listen to a 20-minute amalgam with music at the end of each week.

They are specifically designed to help you implement Sensational Eater Method, and are focused on enjoying planning, feeling your feelings, hunger and fullness, and more.

**Hypnosis has a proven use for solving particular problems.**

Hypnosis has been studied. A lot. Psychologists have been fascinated by placebo – how the mind can create healing in the body when it believes in a healing treatment – and the related process of hypnosis, and they have put it to the test a lot.

The uses of hypnosis that are proven to be most effective, in combination with CBT are:

- Habit change and mild addictions – you probably know someone who used it for stopping smoking, for example.
- Anxiety responses – like curing fears and phobias.
- Tolerating pain (for instance, it's used in the NHS a lot with dentistry).
- Irritable bowel syndrome (the NHS has also adopted it for this and Nerva app is good).
- Creating determination and motivation in sports people.

There is some - disputed – evidence that hypnosis and CBT can help with weight loss<sup>3</sup>. To date, there have been two meta-analyses of hypnotherapy, one found it to be massively useful, the second didn't.

When I stopped binge eating, I used hypnotherapy cassettes that I found hugely encouraging, reassuring and calming, so I'm a convert by personal experience!

That's why I'm passionate about it and why I'm going to tell you more about it.

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<sup>3</sup> Self-Hypnosis for Weight Loss: Can It Help?

<https://www.healthline.com/health/weight-loss/self-hypnosis-for-weight-loss#the-process>

**The hypnotherapy in this programme is different.**

I have listened to a lot of the hypnotherapy audio recordings on the market that seek to assist weight loss with hypnosis. Many are very good and have great general suggestions. You may have tried ‘hypnotic gastric band’ hypnotherapy, or used Paul McKenna’s popular book and CD ‘I Can Make You Slim’.

None of them, though, have the detailed understanding of the psychology of weight and overeating that you’ll find in this programme.

Commercial hypnosis recordings offer to solve weight loss, and stop you binge eating. They tend to make suggestions like:

*Imagine yourself slimmer, feel how good your clothes feel on your body  
You find it easy to put your fork down when you’re satisfied  
You love to feel healthy and do healthy exercise  
I’m doing it, and I’m sticking to it*

It’s all well and good to imagine yourself having the outcome you’d like to. But it’s just scratching the surface.

We have much more leverage with our brain than just wishful visualisations, and we are here to understand and unwind your personal patterns as an eater too.

We can do much better than off-the-shelf, one-size-fits-all audio recording. With an understanding of our eating psychology.

- We can actually find the thoughts that can motivate you personally in a virtuous circle.
- We can break the thought patterns and self-beliefs that keep you in a cycle of bingeing or overeating.
- We can give you cognitive rehearsal of allowing urges to roll through your body, and you not eating over them.
- And we can support you in feeling your feelings instead of eating over them.

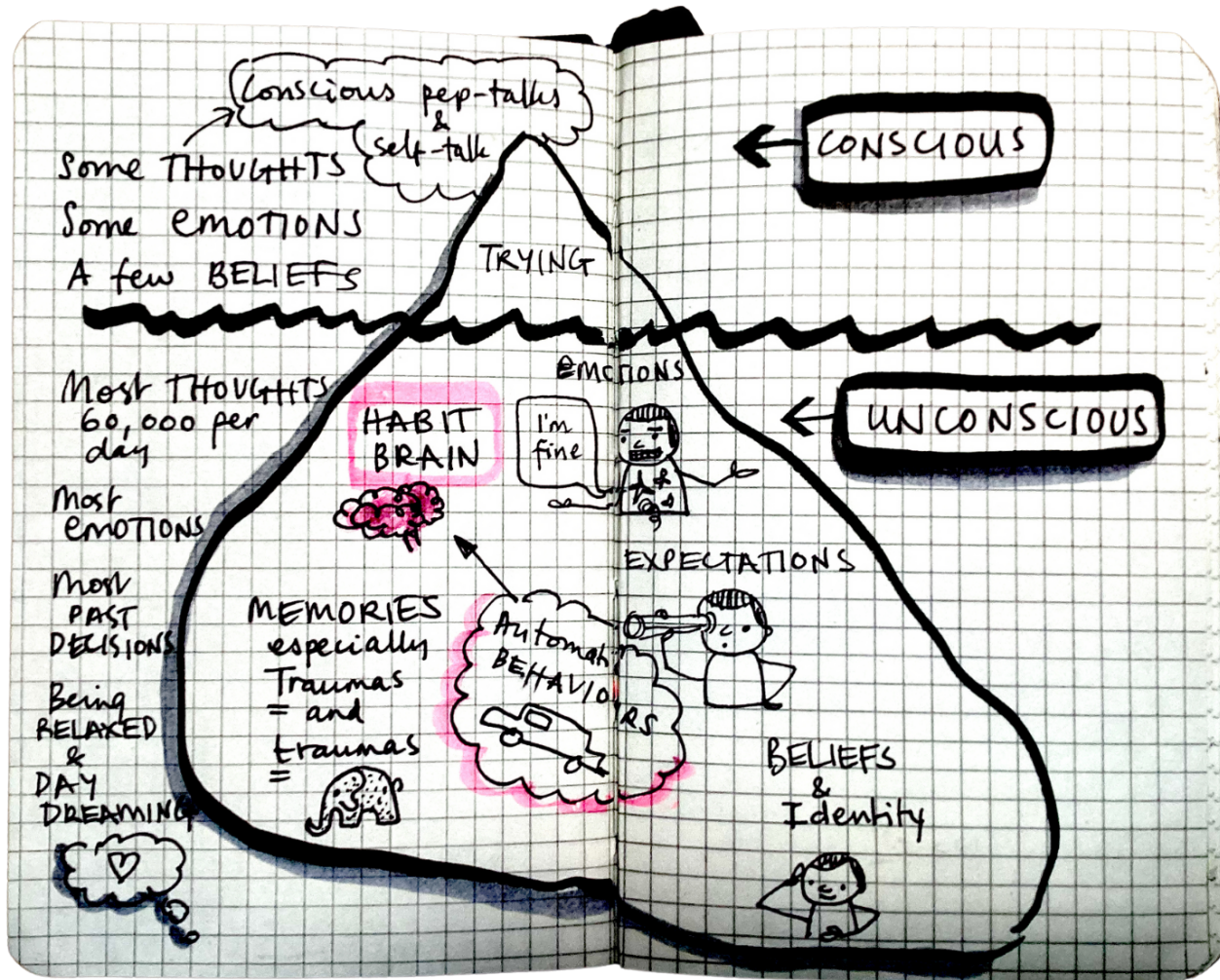
So in this programme, every module, I’m going to give you a targeted hypnosis session especially for you, with unprecedented psychological detail.

I’ll feed you the exact powerful thoughts that make it feel good, and right, and uplifting, to take healthy action.

You’ll change your beliefs about yourself, and your attitude. On an unconscious, as well as a conscious level.

**Does the unconscious mind really exist?**

It sure does! The 'unconscious mind' is your habit brain. It's like an iceberg:





**We need to bypass your intellect.**

Your memories, and even some of your emotions will be happening beneath your level of conscious awareness, your beliefs and expectations – all rumble on without you really noticing you have them. Until something happens that brings them to your attention.

Like, it wasn't until I came home with my kids from their swimming lesson one time, and found my husband was still on the computer, that I realised – *“Oh, I was expecting he'd have dinner ready.”* I didn't even think I needed to communicate it, so strongly held was my unconscious belief that *of course he will and should cook* that I didn't even think it was possible for him believe differently.

That's an example of my unconscious mind at work.

The reason I love visual learning, along with hypnotherapy and simple self-talk sentences, is that both of those modes bypass your intellect and speak straight to your unconscious mind.

Your unconscious guides you on autopilot.

Your habit brain remembers stuff for you, so that every time you do an action, it becomes easier and easier.

Think about it: First you had to focus to drive a car, and then bit by bit, your habit brain took over the necessary actions, until eventually you could drive, talk on a handsfree phone, and put your hand behind you so your kid could put an apple core in it, all at the same time.

Habits are shortcuts: anything that worked once, that your brain remembers to do again. But your brain doesn't discriminate – if there was a reward at the end of the behaviour, that's enough of a signal that the behaviour 'worked', so your brain remembers and repeats it. Food is, by its nature, rewarding, so it's not surprising your brain remembers food habits especially quickly.

**But when I overeat, I'm out of control. There's definitely something wrong with me!**

If you have the scary thought “I'm out of control”, you're not alone, I promise.

But it isn't true. It's just the *autopilot feeling* of doing habitual behaviours.

And although those eating behaviours happen very fast or in a dream right now – sometimes bingeing happens in a blur and then you come to your senses when it's over – over time we'll reintroduce awareness and conscious decision-making into that process and carve out some new patterns for your brain.

Are you binge eating right now? I know it feels bigger than you and powerful. But it is really just a habitual, learned behaviour.

I know. Breathe.

- This also applies to if you feel like you are walking on autopilot to the fridge or the cupboards whilst working from home.
- Or if you are inevitably swinging by certain shops on the way home from work.
- Or if you promise yourself to go to bed on time and end up watching TV till dawn while munching snacks again.
- If you feel like you can't have certain foods in the house.

You are not actually out of control – You are just on autopilot.

Pilots use autopilot for part of the journey, then when they hit turbulence they switch it off and take back the controls.

As an overeater, you have hit turbulence, my friend, and it's time for you to take back the controls.

You're gonna especially love it when we talk about urges in **Module 3 – Emotions!**

**But I've tried to change my habits before! How is this any different?**

Everybody has changed a habit at some point, but most of our energy has gone into the habit behaviours.

For instance, when I first started reading about habit change, I used what I read to start running again. I was living in Berlin and had one child, had just had a miscarriage from my second pregnancy, and wanted to reconnect to my body's strength and health.

As advised by the habit book I was reading, I used 'hacks' like putting my running clothes out the night before, tracking my progress, always going for a run at the same time each day, and focusing on getting my trainers on.

For running, which I had learned to do once in my life as part of a running group before when I lived in London, this worked. My brain basically had one or two simple, negative opinions about running I had to overcome:

*This'll be hard.*

*I've only ever done this once before, maybe that was a fluke.*

*I don't want to.*

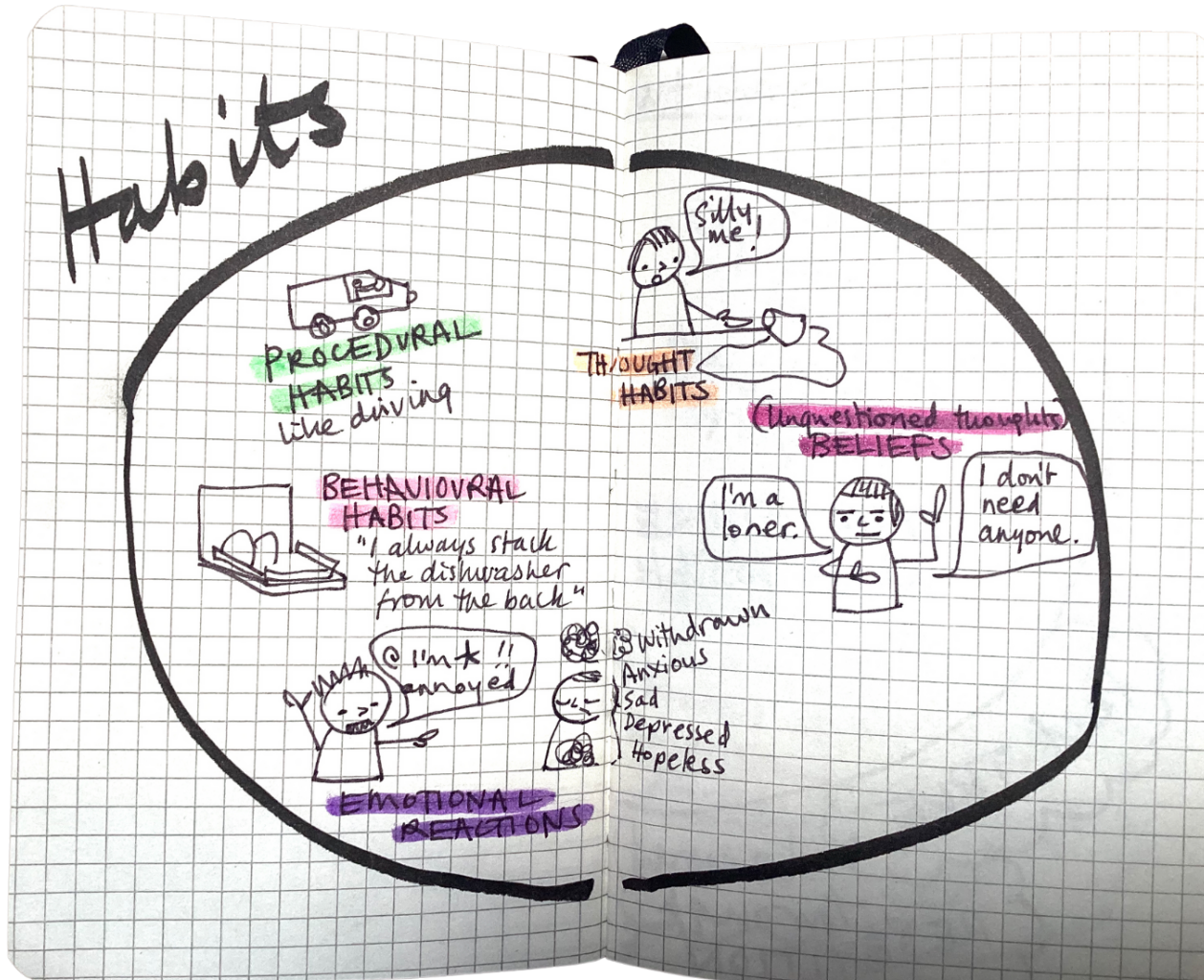
I never had to deliberately work with my habit on a psychological level because quickly, the reward of being outdoors and having time to myself, the glow of wellbeing after exercising, and just focusing on putting my trainers on, all pretty much covered it and the negative thoughts were outweighed by positive ones.

But the habit of lifting food to our mouths when we aren't hungry might need some psychological work before we do the physical habits. It is something we do hundreds of times a day, and have a lifetime of trying, succeeding, failing, and trying new things.

We also have many, many overeating habits, not just one big one. So we need a more nuanced understanding.

**Changing habits happens first at the level of belief.**

The crucial thing that you probably know, but nobody's ever explicitly told you before is that habits affect us at every level. Not just behavioural.



- We have **physical habits** that our procedural memory holds for us: How to move our body in a practiced way that works (Driving a car, chopping a carrot, pouring water into a cup).
- And we have **behavioural habits** too: What we eat, how we shop.
- We also have **habitual thought patterns**. We talk to ourselves, and think about ourselves, in the same way, day to day. For example, if I were to ask you which body part you think about most when you look in the mirror, what would you say? I have thought patterns about my belly. I don't have any at all about my knees.
- Thoughts that we have repeated a lot become so habituated that they feel like *who we are*: these are **beliefs**. If I repeatedly think "I look old", I'll probably start to think "I'm old" after a while.
- Our **emotional reactions** are also habitual and knee-jerk. For example, I'm alone clearing up after dinner, I often feel burdened and resentful. I could feel peaceful, satisfied, determined, celebratory. But it's my habit to feel that.

I'm sure you've heard that phrase, "Neurons that fire together, wire together." We make associations, and every time we repeat the association, it gets stronger and more unconscious until it just feels right. *I always have a biscuit with my cup of tea.*

Thoughts that we think habitually, become beliefs: thoughts we have, that we no longer even consciously think, they just seem like the truth.

*Beliefs = habitual thoughts (about ourselves, our past, our future, and how the world is.)*

This feeling of rightness that goes with a habitual thought/belief is the thing that's confusing, because our impulses have been conditioned: it feels natural and right to do what your habit brain says and weirdly wrong and awkward not to. Like stroking a cat's fur in the wrong direction.

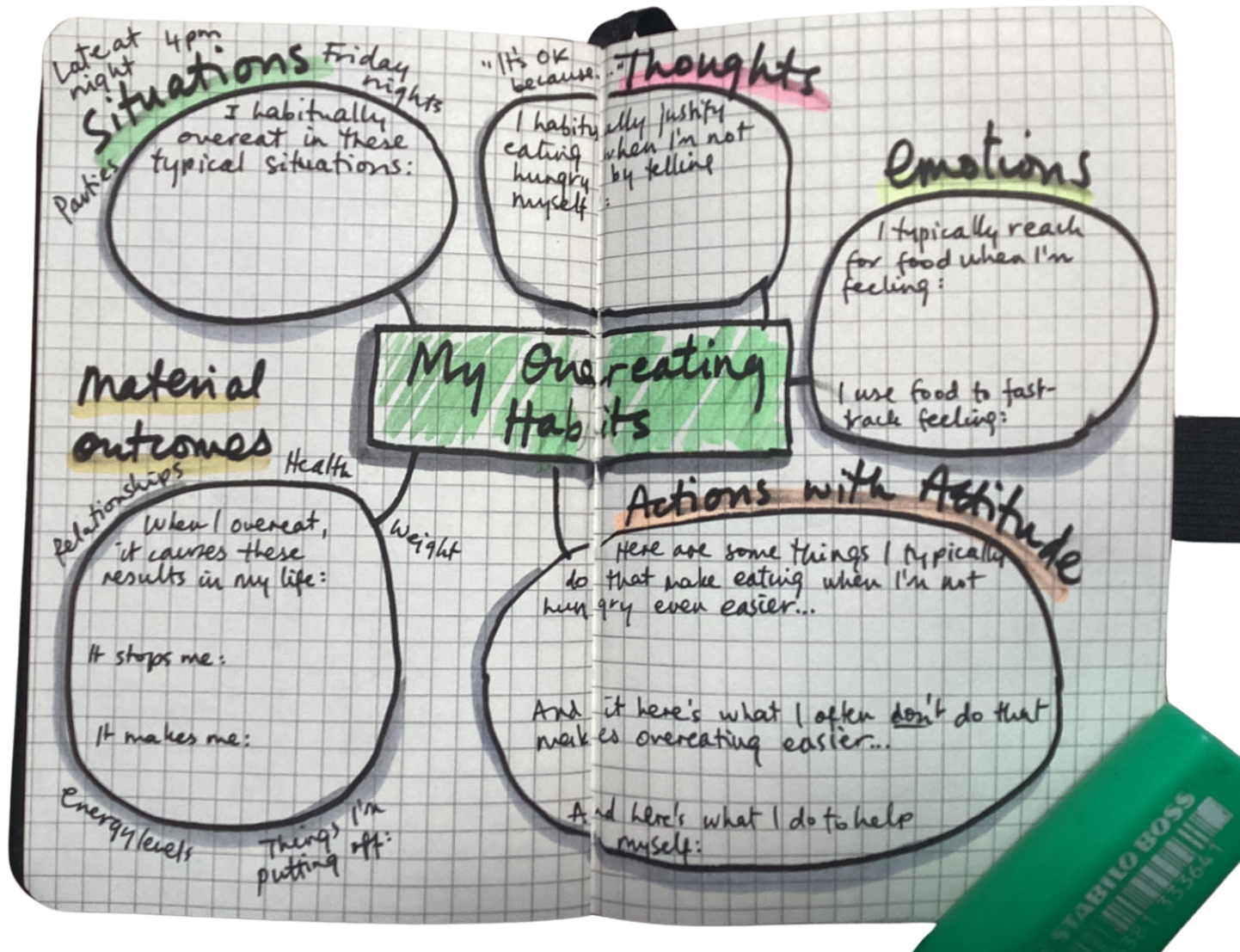
If you want to change, you have to stroke the cat backwards, my friend.

It's important to remember this, because as we change habitual thoughts and feelings, we have to 'push' the brain outside of its comfort zone to do things differently. It won't feel 'right'.

As we go on, you'll realise, that if a new behaviour feels unnatural, awkward or even anxiety-inducing, you're probably doing something new. This, Chickpea, is the definition of courage.

\*Working writing: Take a moment to map your overeating habits.

You might like to use this format:



## **The Sequence**

In this programme, we use this sequence of letters to talk about the different psychological components of our human experience. It's designed to bring habitual thoughts and feelings to your attention.

S  
T  
E  
A  
M

You're going to see it a lot in this programme! It's the spine of your self-coaching.

I call this The Sequence.

I invented this sequence, but the basic principle of it is borrowed from Albert Ellis's REBT, Brooke Castillo's 'model', CBT's simplified Think-Feel-Act cycle. Similar versions are everywhere, in psychology literature. It is tremendously, stupendously useful, so make good friends with it. It really is the key to the universe.

If I say "Let's do a sequence", I mean that we'll write out these letters and figure out what your brain is doing for each component.

Want to know what the letters stand for?

The components are these:

S= Situations  
T= Thoughts  
E= Emotions  
A= Actions with Attitude  
M= Material outcomes

Here's how it works:

Situations just *are*. Outside our control. We have thoughts and opinions about them.

Thoughts (and beliefs) create emotions.

Emotions motivate actions.

Actions produce Material Outcomes.

If the material outcomes are rewarding, our brains will want to repeat the whole sequence: The thought, the emotion, and the action (and get that reward again).

Our brains have hundreds of sequences in a day. This is how we experience our inner and outer world. The reason you overeat is because you have thoughts and emotions behind your actions, and our work in this programme is to find and rewire them.

Sometimes, you might just do a shortened version of The Sequence in the journal pages of your planner.

T  
E  
A

T= Thoughts

E= Emotions

A= Actions

Doing a TEA journal page means, I'm going to take a notebook page and to figure out what I'm thinking, what emotion that thought is creating, and how I act (and what attitude towards action) ensues from it.

It's very user-friendly and you can't possibly forget it! You'll get fully guided in using your notebook to understand your thoughts in **Module 2, Thoughts**.





**But other people can change their habits really easily. Why haven't I managed this before now?**

Overeaters have different habits, thoughts and emotional reactions to non-overeaters.

We weren't born that way, and we are not deficient. In fact, our brains are working perfectly, doing what brains do best: making habits. Overeating is a learned behaviour, and so are the thoughts and emotions that go with it.

- Non-overeaters are mostly people who haven't internalised all of society's mixed-up messages. (We'll look at these **beliefs** in the next chapter.)
- They also aren't suffering from a load of strict, pushy, panicky or judgy self-talk. (**Thoughts**)
- They aren't so averse to feeling **emotions**. And because they don't have all the self-judgment, they don't have all the shame either.

So a non-overeater can easily adopt and be successful at a plan for 'eating right'. It's clean and clear-cut for them. The plan is a plan. Their weight is just numbers on a scale. Maths. Neutral. Tell them the plan, they follow it. It's natural.

That's why many health coaches or diet proponents just provide a really fancy plan. All people need is a plan, and a little encouragement, right?

Not for everyone, no.

You see, the overeater can't follow that plan, and for good reason: there are mental blocks (the thoughts and emotional reactions) in the way.

Many health professionals, at this point, restate the plan. That's like speaking louder to someone from a foreign country who can't speak your language. It's just embarrassing!

- Governments make the plan even simpler - so simple it seems completely arbitrary: "Eat 5 fruit and veg a day". This gives the message that if you don't follow their recommendation, it's because you are stupid.
- Fitness professionals and nutritionists make the plan more specific: Do this exact workout I planned for you. Weigh your food to these exact amounts. They supervise you in doing it, and measure your progress.
- Apps ask you to monitor your plan, and give you little dopamine hits for interacting with it. If you're doing your plan, this will keep you consistent, but if you're not doing it, you'll avoid opening the app.

None of these address the real problem: We overeaters haven't, until now, successfully persuaded our brains to do the new thing. Our brains are still on autopilot doing the old thing.

You see, when I used the analogy of a plane and a pilot, that wasn't a great analogy. A plane does what you tell it, it has no will of its own.

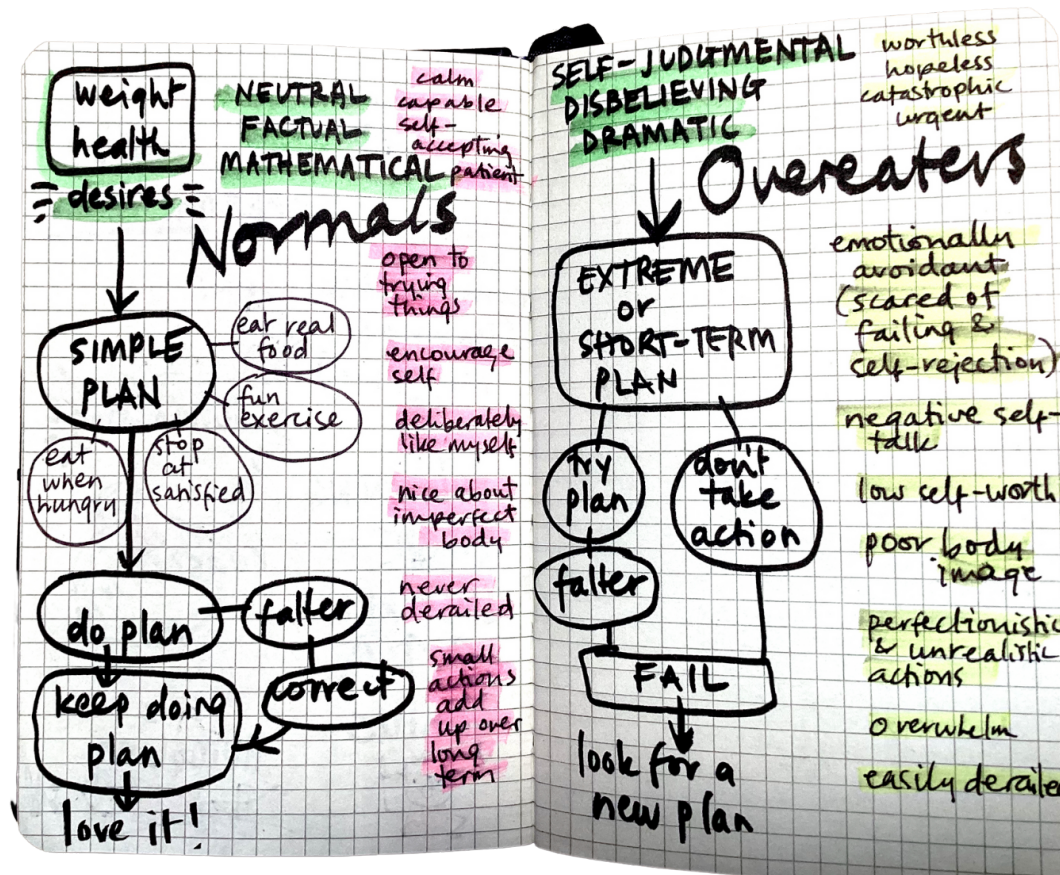
So let's think instead about a toddler again. Say you're in charge of the toddler and every afternoon you cuddle her and she falls asleep on your lap. But your arm goes dead and you can't make use of the time while she's sprawled on you, so you want to change that, so one day, you take back control from your usual habit and lift her onto the couch. She wakes up. She is not happy! Because it's not like taking back control of a plane: a toddler will resist, and be upset.

That toddler is your brain when you want to change your overeating habits. It's going to need loving through it, patiently cajoling, explaining, repeatedly encouraging in the right direction, and maybe for you to make the new thing fun too.

This is the thing: How can you persuade yourself to action a new plan for eating when there's so much fear of weight gain, pressure to do it perfectly, and a sense that it all reflects on who you are as a person? How can you motivate yourself to keep going long-term, and stop sabotaging?

This is where the action is. Removing the blocks is what we are here to do in this programme, so that by the time we have finished, eating is eating, and plans are just neutral plans.

We'll look more at making plans and creating simple systems that work in **Actions – Module 4**. Meanwhile, don't forget to look at the **Quickstart module** to see how simple a plan can really be if you used post-it notes and started small.



**Don't forget you are not alone.**

You have a coach. I'm with you. And I'm going to be with you every step of the way. Use your sessions. Bring it all to your sessions.

Resist shame's call to isolate yourself.

Resist resistance's call to grind to a halt.

Honestly, this is me, Laura, you're talking to. You can tell me anything.

Here's how low I have stooped: Once in my 40s I picked up food off the floor in my kitchen and casually ate it. I thought it was dark chocolate, but it was a lump of boot polish, and turned my mouth greasy and black.

I have got food out of the bin. I have purposely made myself puke. I have stolen food from my housemates and my children.

So, you can tell me ANYTHING. Eating coaching will better equip you to solve life problems.

Managing your thoughts, and becoming more emotionally alive, are key life skills.

You'll become adept at:

- Bringing your thoughts into plain sight.
- Allowing yourself to feel all feelings, both comfortable and uncomfortable.
- Change old, limiting beliefs about yourself.
- Disentangling what's 'your stuff' from your relationships and dealing with it, without using food.

These will affect your whole being, not just your eating. So please, never tell yourself that it's a waste of time to focus on your eating, body image and weight because it seems vain or self-focused.

Because in the scheme of things, it won't be a waste at all. Food is the prompt you're getting from the universe to learn life skills.

You ready? You betcha. Let's go!



**CHAPTER 4: ERAS OF LIFE**

**A special welcome to you, coming here at your age and stage of life**

**If you are here as a teenager or young adult**, as I was when I first studied eating psychology to heal my own binge eating in my early twenties: Welcome, because you are a pioneer of future thinking about weight and bodies.

That you have found your way here is a triumph of personal curiosity, because 75% of all eating disorder sufferers never seek help, and dysfunctional eating starts early – in childhood, even – for so many of us.

Maybe you don't think of yourself as an eating disorder sufferer exactly – don't worry, because getting your relationship with food sorted early so you can live a wonderful, free life is absolutely the best investment of your time right now.

Don't do what your grandmother or mother did. Use new knowledge to be a cultural influencer.

You have already lived through school with its friendship and belonging challenges, and the pressures to succeed and study. You have survived the self-consciousness and emphasis on appearance that teen hood brings. But more than any other generation, you're growing up in a time where other everyday addictions – like phone use, social media, on-demand tv, gaming, drinking coffee and energy drinks, vaping, drinking alcohol – are absolutely in your face, 24/7.

Marketing gurus know that, and see your attention as prime real estate they are trying to buy up parts of all the livelong day.

My young clients have little experience of doing nothing and just hanging out with themselves, because their 'relax' time has been cluttered with scrolling.

So, learning a relationship with yourself where you feel your feelings, instead of numbing out is gonna be key. And learning the skills of truly and deliciously relaxing and switching off – getting mindful, connecting to the nature and the planet – might be something you have to adopt deliberately.

Smart you! You are here, and your future self thanks you.

**If you are in your 30s**, and you feel like you should have this sussed but don't – you're actually not alone.

Statistically, eating dysfunction peaks in our 30s<sup>4</sup>.

It's my belief that's because it's a time of life where our success ethic is in full swing. And the harder we work, the more we use things like food (and drink, caffeine, screens, under sleeping, etc) to compensate and reward ourselves.

We are trying to be successful on all levels and treat our body goals as if they work the same as our work goals – but it's a body, an organism, not a project. And the try-hard strategies don't work.

You likely push yourself hard on all fronts. And striving - bullying yourself and sacrificing sleep to succeed, trying to outrun impostor syndrome and insecurity – is not a lifelong strategy.

Your 30s are the perfect time to change your success strategies, and find out how achieve more without trying so damn hard.

You're in the right place, and I'm proud of you already.

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<sup>4</sup> The Lancet psychiatry journal: The hidden burden of eating disorders: an extension of estimates from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019

<https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366%2821%2900040-7/fulltext>



**If you are a parent**, you are probably thinking both about your own dodgy eating patterns and not passing body image preoccupations onto your kids.

I know you're probably overwhelmed, knackered, constantly interrupted, trying to stage-manage lots of other people's happiness, and barely have time to burn a pizza let alone cook the 5 different suppers that cater to everyone's needs. Or is that just me?

But I want to assure that although you might be low on time and energy, in some respects, parents have access to some immediate and advantageous wisdom: You are learning to acknowledge your children's feelings and help them regulate. And you are already loving them unconditionally.

These are both profound acts that you just need to start doing for yourself.

For many of us who were, in whatever ways, overlooked emotionally in our own family of origin (we'll look at this more in **Module 3- Emotions**), and who haven't been encouraged or have a sense of self-worth and confidence robustly intact, it's amazing to discover we can intentionally create that for a little person. And therefore, we can create that for ourselves.

Welcome, and thank you for healing yourself and for planting seeds of compassion in the future generation.

**If you're 40+, you're likely having a midlife crisis SPIRITUAL AWAKENING.**

Our bodies aren't workhorses and if we have got to success by overworking, we're going to feel it now. AND our bodies need more support, care, and health intervention than they did before.

If you have tried and failed different weight strategies up until now, it's time to reckon with your weight struggle, and choose a realistic system that works.

It's a very demanding time of life, and you may be managing people at work, while caring for younger AND older people in your family.

If you are experiencing numbing or addictive behaviours like sugar addiction, using convenience food or take out to make your work life easy and reward long hours, zonking out in front of box sets ... you will start to see these as red flags indicating you're on a road to burnout. But you also have a ton of experience to problem-solve like the pro you are.

**If you're a woman who's 40+ who has periods**, then you're also likely to be in, or soon to experience, perimenopause. It's a time of re-evaluation. There are health challenges and mood challenges, and actually, many of the ways you can support your metabolism for weight management are also the same self-care strategies that'll help your body through menopause and beyond.

And there are also ways you can adapt your worklife so you can keep making your best contribution to the world without burning out. One thing's for sure – this is a great time to let go of people-pleasing, and to stop saying Yes to helping everybody else at your own expense. This is a time to edit and essentialize.

And it's also a great time to redefine your identity, your values, and your relationship with yourself. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a vision for yourself in menopause, and stop squandering your valuable time and awesome experience on trying to get thighs that don't touch?

It's time to think about bone health, heart health, hormone health and energy levels in an empowered way. So let's do all that, and try to get a good night's sleep into the bargain.

If weight is a particular preoccupation at this time, or you're still wrestling with a lifelong binge pattern or weight struggle - and you're thinking "I should be over this by now" – know that, statistically you're completely normal. Weight does redistribute towards the midsection in perimenopause so you will be reconciling with a body shape that's shifting. But it is time to solve your weight struggle with modern, sustainable strategies, and then draw a line under it. That was the first half of your life. This is a transition, and it's a wonderful transition, so let's create a vision and live into it.

**If you are 50+ you may think you're too old to change, or that you shouldn't still be dieting or bingeing.** If you're willing to be coached, there are no limits.

- The two problems that I notice when I coach people in this age group are:
- Trying to perfect a relationship with food after a lifetime centred around solving this one singular problem – when in fact time is precious, and getting our eating relationship to a point where it's OK so we can pay attention to our lives is more important; and
- Still dieting and trying the next health trend. Still feeling lifetime body image hangups like “I have always had huge legs”. And still doing a binge habit.

The way we have been talking to ourselves all our lives doesn't go anywhere unless we solve it.

Same for our binge behaviours – it's not really a surprise that they haven't been resolved if doing so means we resolve our relationship with weight and we've never been taught to make the necessary inner changes to do that.

A particularly rich place to work in this age group is in looking at payoffs – all the ways that our weight struggle has become our known territory, our comfort zone. Our source of hope and promise of salvation. Guilt and not-enoughness feels like who we are.

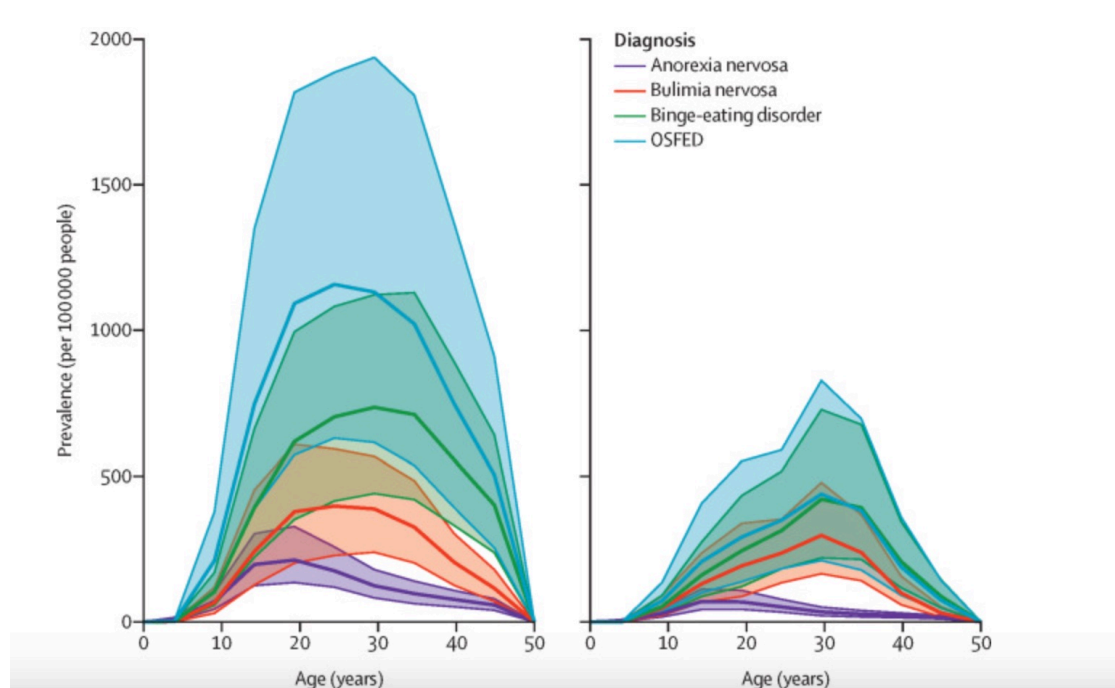
Changing requires guidance, active engagement and learning to self-coach: I have seen it done, and it's a wonderful journey at any age.

A special welcome to everyone from every walk of life.

**If you're a man. - this deserves a special mention** – you may be feeling like an outlier. Binge eating, body image and weight aren't solely women's problems. In fact, around 30% of binge eaters are male<sup>5</sup>. Shame and addictive behaviours are human propensities and we all experience them.

Men are raised to feel less, and be strong, be sporty, and competitive, and success-driven. I mean, we're in a society where binge drinking, or taking drugs with your mates, is a whole lot cooler and more socially accepted than spooning peanut butter out of a jar in secret.

But guilt and struggle do nothing and get us nowhere. The planet needs humans to wake up and feel more. We all need to stop chasing external success for status and to please our parents or impress our friends. That's slavery to values we haven't even chosen. You're going to love this work. So – welcome, and we salute your courage in being here.



In this chart, men are on the right, women are on the left.

<sup>5</sup> This statistic can be found in the National Collaboration on Eating Disorders <https://nedc.com.au/eating-disorders/eating-disorders-explained/eating-disorders-in-males>. The trends are changing, this article also highlights that: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jul/31/eating-disorders-in-men-rise-by-70-in-nhs-figures>

**If you identify with a group I have not mentioned**, welcome here too. Identity and body go together for every single one of us.

And we know that environment and demographics – what section of society you hail from – correlate to our weight. Yes that's right! This makes perfect sense – food poverty leaves a lasting psychological imprint, and trauma is associated with eating disorders and weight too. So it's not just 'how you eat'.

We are all from different groups of society, cultural backgrounds, religious backgrounds, sexualities, gender identities, abilities and disabilities - and we will all be socialised with a bunch of messages about how we 'should' be that are putting pressure on us to try to make our bodies into what we think 'they' want and teach us to disown and mistrust them.

Emerging research suggests that people who identify as trans, gender non-binary or gender diverse are at two to four times greater risk of eating disorder symptoms or disordered eating behaviours than their cisgender counterparts<sup>6</sup>.

And we are wrestling with our own thoughts about ourselves too. We'll soon be diving into all this messaging in **Module 1 – The Situation** and reaching for self-worth amidst the maelstrom. For now, know that you are welcome here.

We're all in this together.

What we have in common is greater than our differences. Look for those common threads if you choose to interact in our online community space!

Our community thrives on the different perspective you bring and the belief that we belong.

So, if you haven't found our community space yet - there's a link in your **Welcome section** of the online course - please come and introduce yourself!

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<sup>6</sup> Eating Disorders and Males <https://nedc.com.au/eating-disorders/eating-disorders-explained/eating-disorders-in-males>

SUMMARY of this chapter:

1. What does stopping overeating and eating 'normally' look like to you?
2. An eating psychology approach is about removing mental obstacles that are stopping you following someone else's eating plan.
3. Eating Psychology is a switch in perception and attitude to your eating. It's a journey, not a destination. A practice, not something you can achieve.
4. You probably won't become a perfect eater, and trying to become one is a waste of your valuable energy and time. But you can stop overeating, and that will bring you huge relief, clarity, and teach you skills that'll help your whole life.
5. You are here to completely put your eating struggle to bed.
6. The only action you should take at first is studying: journaling/writing in your workbook, and listening to hypnosis audio). Don't try to change your habits, control your eating, stop the binges, or lose weight at this point.
7. You will come out of this with one approach, chosen by you, to suit your life. It will be a system, not a solution.
8. You will evolve your system through trial and error. So, error is to be expected and is welcome as part of this process.
9. You can do this. I believe in you 100%. Borrow my belief in you. One day, you'll be surprised and say "You were right!".
10. Let go of perfectionism. Study what you can. That is enough to make huge changes.
11. Follow this process: Read textbook, Do written textbook exercises, Watch online course videos, Get coached, do hypnosis, repeat listen to hypnosis.
12. Hypnosis is a way of talking directly to your unconscious mind.
13. Your unconscious mind is the keeper of your habit brain. Habits feel comfortable and 'right'. When you try to change them, it'll feel all wrong. Do it anyway.
14. Being 'out of control' is just a thought. The out-of-control sensation is just your habit brain auto piloting you.
15. Habits are not just behaviours. Every level of our psychological process includes habits. We have habitual thoughts and emotional reactions too.
16. In this programme, we are going to use an acronym STEAM which is called The Sequence. It shows how thoughts create emotions, and emotions motivate actions. We'll also use the short version, TEA.

17. Non-overeaters don't have the same beliefs, thoughts and emotions as overeaters. Overeaters will have to remove these mental blocks and persuade their brains to take action.
18. Simple, fun, easy. Let's do it this way.
19. There may be some emotional discomfort. It'll be worth it.
20. You are not alone.
21. No matter your stage of life or identity, you are in the right place. Each stage of life presents body image, health and eating challenges. It's never too late to break free.

**ACTION CHECKLIST:**

- Read/listened to this module.
- Answered the working questions and signed the agreements with yourself in this textbook module.
- Went to the online course - looked through:
  - The Welcome section
  - The Self-coaching Month section
  - The Hypnosis section
- (If you are bingeing) Watched the Binge Diminishing bonus module before going further.
- Got fixed up with the coach messaging service, and did a test message.
- Joined the Community Area in the coach messaging service, and introduced myself.
- Looked through the Sensational Eater Quickstart modules for use when I'm ready to use my planner, and decided whether to start using the planner now, or come back to it later.
- Booked 1:1 sessions with Laura (40mins/week for the first 4 months, except April, August and September); 20mins/week months 5-12.
- Did the End of Intro Quiz in the online course platform.
- Listened to the 5-minute Belief hypnosis recordings (or the 16-minute combined one) at least a few times each.
- Dropped a video or other message into the coach messaging service that shares my main learnings, either in the private conversation with Laura or into the Community space.