

Non-hunger eating: The Eating Blueprint approach, part 4

Flap

Being in a “flap”, or feeling overwhelmed, leaves us feeling agitated, flustered and unable to think straight. We are all familiar with this feeling, when the chaos of life gets too much. Eating can be a way of attempting to soothe against this chaos, and many people find that they nervously or anxiously eat when they are in this “flap”-like state.

Often there is little we can do to change things and we have to ride on through the chaos. Sometimes, however, if we give ourselves time to think we can track the chaos back to its roots, giving us the power to create a different outcome.

Various regular situations can cause us to “flap”, for example:

- The morning routine with the kids
- Not being able to find your keys when you leave the house.
- Staying late at work and then rushing home.
- Your commute to work by car or train.
- Not paying bills on time and then rushing to get to the bank.
- Your friend always calling for long chats, getting you off track with your daily to-dos.

I advise people that while these events are a natural part of a full life, their response to some situations that regularly overwhelm them can be changed. I ask them to think about a change they could make to address an event that causes them to “flap”, for example:

- Sacrificing an extra 10 minutes in bed one morning and seeing whether that makes any difference with the morning routine.
- Putting a bowl by the door that they can drop their keys into when they come in.
- Putting an alarm on their work desk that subtly signals when it is home time – at least then if they stay late they are doing so with their eyes wide open.

- Considering whether there is a way of making the commute less stressful – listening to their favourite music, podcast or audiobook.
- Setting up a direct debit and letting the bank take the strain.
- Letting their friend go to voicemail occasionally and then sending him or her a text to say that they will call her after work.

Following

“Following” describes the times when people start to eat and then find it difficult to stop. This often happens with “domino” foods, where one is never enough, such as nuts, crisps, sweets or chocolates out of a box.

There are lots of reasons why people end up overeating. Domino foods have the additional power to subtly hypnotise people, so they are unaware of what they are doing until the packet/box/plate is empty. As the rhythm of repeatedly reaching for food and putting it in your mouth is soothing and satisfying, people can get lost in the motion, the conversation they are having, the programme they are watching, the text they are sending, the Facebook page they are checking, etc.

I encourage members of the Eating Blueprint community to think about the “following” they may unknowingly be hypnotised into. If their “following” happens with dry roasted peanuts in the pub (one of my personal favourites), games to tackle this might include:

- “Following”, but using your left hand rather than your right hand.
- Putting the bowl of nuts behind your friend’s drink on the table, instead of in front of yours.
- Putting the nuts in your hand between picking them up and eating them, so you can feel them in your palm rather than just in your mouth.
- Saying out loud: “These are great, I’m going to have this one last handful and let you finish the rest” (often a popular one with your friends!).



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About this series

This article is the fourth piece in a six-part series that outlines a number of the psychological skills involved in the Eating Blueprint Starter Programme (Nash, 2016), designed to provide the “psychological skills” to support traditional weight management advice. It continues on from the comment from issue 5 of this journal (pages 152–3).

This article covers five further F-themed strategies. Nurses may be interested using some of these strategies in their time-limited consultations.

About the Eating Blueprint

The Eating Blueprint is a “psychological skills” approach to weight management, equipping individuals with a simple-to-use toolkit of strategies delivered within an online/video programme.

The Eating Blueprint method was created by Dr Jen Nash, Chartered Psychologist. A recovered emotional eater herself, Jen has spent the last 10 years immersed in the heart and mind of eating behaviour, unlocking the missing link of her own food–weight journey, and she now loves nothing more than to inspire others to find theirs.

The programme is available for NHS commissioning or, alternatively, the strategies in this article are available as a book and accompanying online Starter Programme for £12. To access or for further information, please email: hello@eatingblueprint.com

For a free information pack, register your name and email address at:

www.EatingBlueprint.com



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Journal of Diabetes Nursing
19: 401–7

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Remind people you are advising that this is a game and it should be fun. It may be a cliché, but it is not about winning, it is the taking part that counts. The experiment is designed to help people gain more clarity over the conscious and unconscious ways that they eat and to enable them to master their Eating Blueprint.

Free

While buffets at parties or treats in the staff room are all part of the fun of life and the joy of food, it can be helpful to see the often-unvoiced “cost” of free food. If the pleasure of the tasty buffet or staff-room goodies regularly leads to self-criticism (“Why did I go back to the buffet table the third, fourth or fifth time?”) or guilt-laden self-talk (“Why can’t I just resist?”), it is worth considering the darker side of free food. With such inner outcomes, the food is not free at all but comes at a great cost, stealing your sense of self-esteem, your peace of mind, and the lasting opportunity for what you really want – health, wellbeing and a sense of freedom and ease.

I therefore encourage people to consider the hidden costs of the “free” food in their life. This is not about making it “wrong” to enjoy free food when they want, but is about finding their relationship with it, being fully conscious of the gift of free food and the potential cost of what is on offer. It can be helpful to advise people to ask themselves: “Would I be eating this if I had to pay for it?”

There may also be other ways people can give themselves a treat or gift that does not involve food. Ask people to jot down alternative ways in which they might reward themselves.

Furlongs and feet

“Furlongs and feet” refers to the physical distance between you and food. It is easy to see that if food is within our reaching distance, we are more likely to eat it. We have evolved to be this way. When food was scarce, we were programmed to eat food when it was available in order stay alive when it was in short supply. The problem is, in the modern world food is rarely limited and our natural responses have not yet caught up.

People may be familiar with the advice to keep food out of reach. I encourage them to go further than this as, let us face it, food can “call to us” and

sometimes we are happy to answer its call. Whether it is shouting loud and proud from the plate in front of us or gently whispering from the kitchen cupboard, sometimes we just NEED it. Food can feel like a friend who helps us through when we are struggling to meet a work deadline or survive a dutiful trip to see the mother-in-law, but sometimes it is not really the friend it appears.

Encourage the person to identify times when their proximity to food leads to unnecessary or undesired eating. I invite people to be playful with their furlongs and feet. If the bakery “calls” to a person on the way home, for instance, I ask:

- Is there another route you could try so you do not pass the bakery?
- Does crossing to the other side of the street reduce the allure of the bakery? (Is it the smell that is overwhelmingly tempting?)
- Can you phone a friend when you are passing the bakery as a form of distraction?

If the person clears the plates at home and habitually picks at the leftovers, I ask whether there is another family member who can take over this role on a temporary or permanent basis. If the habit involves nibbling in front of the TV, I suggest putting a set number of chocolates on a plate and leaving the box in the kitchen – there is always the option to go back if the chocolates are still calling.

Flavour

It is human nature to eat more of something that tastes delicious. But did you know that people sometimes eat more than they want because the flavour of the food they are eating is not quite hitting the spot?

How often do we stop and think “What flavour do I really want?” before we eat? Our bodies give us clues as to what we should be eating. If we start paying attention to these clues, we may be able to tell whether we are satisfied with a smaller amount rather than eating a large quantity to make up for quality of flavour.

To improve the ability to identify clues their body is giving them when it comes to eating, I ask people to consider what flavour of food they fancy eating today. Even if that flavour is not available, tuning into what they want improves people’s ability to identify what their body wants, which may lead to better food choices. ■