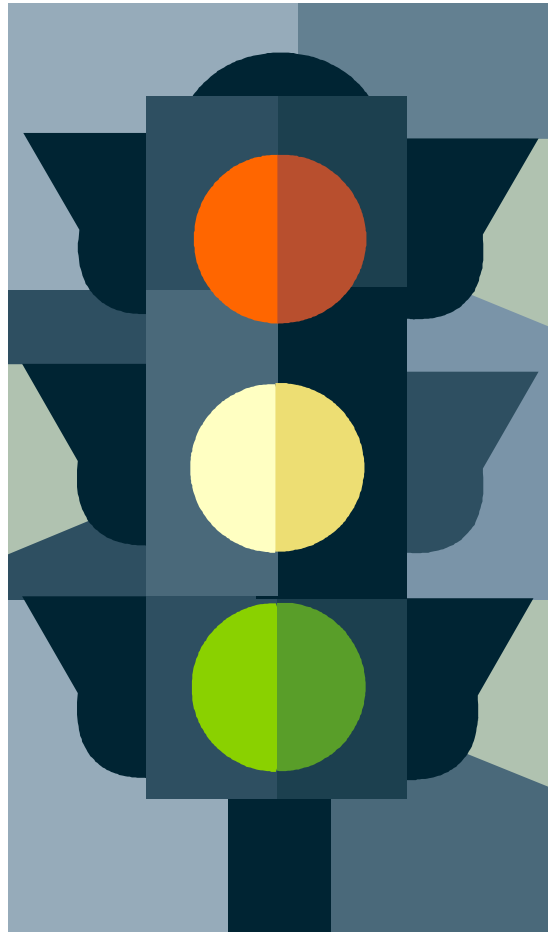


Check Your Hunger Zones

The Easy to Use Guide to Decide When to Eat



Patricia A. Ronzio, M.Ed. CHES
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**Patricia Ronzio, M.Ed. CHES
P.O. Box 200789
Austin, TX 78720, U.S.A.
[512] 244-6292**

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The Easy to Use Guide to Decide When to Eat

The speaker at a business women's monthly luncheon was competing with the dessert just placed on the table in front of each attendee – the restaurant's "to die for" chocolate mousse. Reaching for a spoon triggered a simple question ...

It was a tough day for Jane – an hour and a half drive to the central office, meetings with the company's principals and staff, and managing log jams and road blocks. At the end of her stressful work day she jumped into her car for the commute back home. Wait! There was a bag of pretzels in the glove compartment. Reaching for it stirred that persistent question ...

Last week I prepared a stuffed red pepper dish, while my husband Bob used the crock pot to cook a medley of vegetables. Baked cinnamon apples would be our dessert. Preparations complete and dinner about to be served, I faced the same nagging question ...

Am I actually hungry, and, if so, to what degree? The answer will help resolve related questions! Will I eat now? Shall I select a small or typical (or large) portion? Will I eat later, or not at all?



Why is it important to gauge how hungry you are, BEFORE picking up a fork or spoon?

Beginning to eat without tuning into the body's satiety signals carries the risk of eating more calories than necessary. Like so many women with a history of overeating, my hunger "on/off" switch may not function automatically. The causes are complex. We may not register satiety signals for various emotional reasons: preoccupation with worrisome thoughts and feelings, distractions at the dinner table, and more.

Regardless of origins, women who look to food for stress relief, rather than hunger, have indicated a need for a “real” and meaningful guide to help set the stage for thoughtful decisions, rather than unconscious reactions to stress.

Old solutions don't help

Hunger charts and satiety scales in various formats have been around for decades. Usually these tools require that you rank your hunger or satiety level on a scale from 1 to 10. I have used them all. None work consistently. It's difficult to match abstract numbers with emotions.

“Portion control” emphasizes small plates and shortcuts, such as comparing serving sizes to a deck of cards, dice or a softball. While environmental factors do influence food choices, I propose that the clues to slow down emotional or stress eating are more complex than that. The questions I'm asking myself lie far deeper and I need a more intuitive, less analytical guide.

Check Your Hunger Zones: A new tool to help you become more aware of hunger levels

I decided to develop a workable method to help tune into hunger levels at any time. I considered the experience of clients as well as my own frustration, and then created ***Check Your Hunger Zones***.

This Guide avoids numbers and assessments that get in the way of intuition and insight. It is a very practical way to “push the pause button” and slow down stress eating.

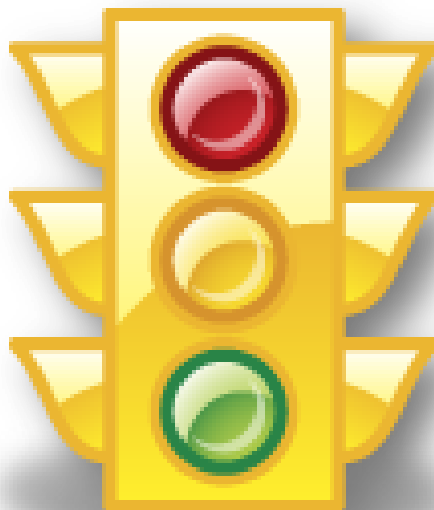
Check your Hunger Zones puts you in charge of what food goes into your mouth. It is a stepping stone to remove any guilt associated with food choices – whether you are about to eat comfort food, junk food or even healthy foods.

The simple chart reproduced on the following pages uses a traffic light image to help you evaluate hunger zones:

Before You Eat: Are you “On Empty”, “Slightly Hungry” or do you have a “Healthy Hunger”?

After Your Eat: Are you “Satisfied”, “Slightly Full”, or “Stuffed”?

Match the colors of the traffic light to discover how to tune into your hunger signals before you eat, while you eat and after you eat.



Check Your Hunger Zones Chart

Instructions: Use the chart to gauge your red, yellow or green levels of hunger [left side] or satiety [right side].

Before You Eat

On Empty

You are ravenously hungry.
Your stomach is growling.
You feel light-headed.



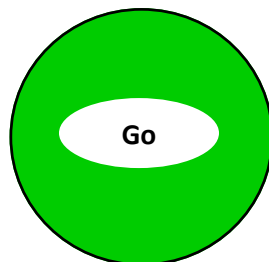
Slightly Hungry

You feel the first signs of
hunger. You could eat but
you could also wait to eat.



Healthy Hunger

Your body signals it is time
to eat.



After You Eat

Stuffed

You can't eat another bite.
Your stomach feels
unpleasantly full.

Slightly Full

You have eaten more than
your body needs. You have
to undo a button to feel
comfortable.

Satisfied Hunger

You eat just enough to
satisfy your healthy hunger.

How to Use Check Your Hunger Zones Before You Eat

Let me demonstrate how I applied ***Check Your Hunger Zones ...before eating*** using insights and insight-inspired actions for red light, yellow light or green light hunger levels.



I AM ON EMPTY

- **What My Body Feels Like:** My fuel tank is at zero.
- **Insights:** This is a dangerous time. I may not care to eat (people who fast may experience the same kind of feeling.) However, once I start eating I tend to devour food, any kind. Like a pendulum swinging to extremes, “On Empty” carries the risk of overeating.
- **Actions:** I avoid being “On Empty” as much as possible. I prepare a healthy snack such as almonds, raisins or an apple if I might be caught out without food.
- **How This Works:** A healthy snack tucked into my handbag is very reassuring. If I end up “On Empty,” I don’t have to resort to junk food to get needed calories quickly.



I AM SLIGHTLY HUNGRY

- **What My Body Feels Like:** Here come the first signs of hunger. Even when mentally preoccupied, my body begins to signal that it will need food soon.
- **Insights:** I can eat right away, or I can also choose to wait.
- **Actions:** I know that I will have a Healthy Hunger very soon – within about 30 minutes of that initial first hunger signal – and I plan for that meal.

- **How This Works:** When I struggled with food and weight I did not fully understand what being hungry meant. I can now sense the optimum time to eat. While I can eat as soon as I feel slightly hungry, I may choose to wait until I have a Healthy Hunger. I feel in charge of my life.



HEALTHY HUNGER

- **What My Body Feels Like:** Hunger pangs signal that my body needs food. I experience an empty feeling, though it is not uncomfortable. This is an optimal time to eat.
- **Insights:** It can be tempting to put off eating, especially if I am in the middle of a project. Ignoring Healthy Hunger carries the risk of switching to “On Empty.” Those of us with hypoglycemic issues need to be vigilant.
- **Actions:** I stop whatever I’m doing and begin meal preparations.
- **How This Works:** I am most productive when I pay attention to this signal and don’t postpone eating. Eating with “Healthy Hunger,” brings a sense of pride, knowing I took care of myself.



How to Use Check Your Hunger Zones After You Eat

The following examples demonstrate how I applied ***Check Your Hunger Zones*** ***...after eating*** using insights and insight-inspired actions for red light, yellow light or green light hunger levels.



SATISFIED HUNGER

- **What My Body Feels Like:** I ate just enough and no longer feel hungry.
- **Insights:** Optimally I satisfy my hunger without becoming even slightly full.
- **Actions:** Aware of the food before me, I stay aware of thoughts and feelings and notice when I have eaten enough to satisfy hunger. I allow enough time to eat my meals so I don't overeat due to a time crunch.
- **How This Works:** Eating just enough is energizing. I don't do well when I overeat.



SLIGHTLY FULL

- **What My Body Feels Like:** I ate more than my body needed. My stomach pushes against a belt or a skirt zip feels tight.
- **Insights:** I regret eating too much. Though the meal was enjoyable, I now feel sluggish. I can tolerate this but I prefer feeling energetic and alert. Afternoons are usually spent sitting at a desk or computer station and I don't want to feel groggy or uncomfortable. Junk food and comfort foods can lead to lethargy.
- **Actions:** Time to be curious about why I ate more than needed and consider thoughts and feelings at mealtimes.

- **How This Works:** Overeating, even a little, strongly hints that thoughts or emotions need attention. This questioning brings me back to the present, and detours automatic stress responses.



STUFFED

- **What My Body Feels Like:** Oops! This is dangerous to my health. I ate way more than needed. My stomach feels bloated and I can't eat another bite. I feel sluggish. I might even become ill with one more mouthful.
- **Insights:** It is important to treat myself gently after overeating. This is important to avoid recriminations like, "There I go again, no will power." Not True! I ask: what am I thinking, what am I feeling? Just like a CSI episode: Where are the clues to decipher cause and effect?
- **Actions:** In considering even a single trigger to overeat to the point of being stuffed, I regard this episode as a gift – a wonderful opportunity to record discoveries and further insights.
- **How This Works:** Observing how I eat becomes a key to understanding relevant life issues. This focus provides an opportunity to find a way back to center. It can kindle gratitude, forgiveness and acceptance through meditation or prayer.



Discover New Insights Before and After You Eat

Now it's your turn.

You have a wonderful opportunity to take light year steps in understanding persistent dilemmas around food and eating.

The goal is to discover new insights – new perspectives – new ideas and solutions – before you eat, and after you eat.

The following chart can help you begin the process by listing how your body feels, in each of the Hunger Zone categories below as a baseline.

Your Baseline: How does your body feel within each category?

 **ON EMPTY** _____

 **SLIGHTLY HUNGRY** _____

 **HEALTHY HUNGER** _____

 **SATISFIED HUNGER** _____

 **SLIGHTLY FULL** _____

 **STUFFED** _____

Once you have identified a baseline of how your body feels in each category of the ***Check Your Hunger Zones*** chart, you may find it useful to follow my example and note your insights, actions and observations.

Do you see patterns? What new insights for eating awareness does ***Check Your Hunger Zones*** provide? Recording new insights in an Insight Journal can help anchor future explorations of where, when and how you eat.

Summing Up

Whether you are interested in a mid-afternoon snack, indulging in a Thanksgiving extravaganza, or eating breakfast on the go, I invite you to stop for a minute to assess whether or not you are hungry before eating.

The reasons for such a self-check are clear:

Eating when you are not hungry can lead to overriding mechanisms that help balance food intake with physiological needs. In simple terms, this means overeating, surplus calories and weight gain.

Deciding to eat, or not to eat, requires more than a simple “Yes” or “No” response. It is just as important to know whether you are ravenous versus a little hungry, or whether you are satisfied versus stuffed and bloated, if you are to truly understand your eating behavior.

Check Your Hunger Zones represents a highly useful method to become a conscious eater. Your fresh awareness is fertile ground for new insights and solutions.

Get ready for an exciting journey. New Paradigm Coaching emphasizes insight-building and personal awareness to break free of old, self-limiting habits around eating.

I would love to hear about your unique insights into your own issues around food, weight or body image from working with the ***Check Your Hunger Zones*** Action Guide.

To your freedom from stress and overeating!

Patricia

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Explore www.newparadigmcoaching.com where you can access the following:

- ♥ **Blog:** Subscribe to the Frazzled to Free Blog
 - ♥ **8 Minute Stress Relief:** Relax with a FREE guided imagery
 - ♥ **Wellness Blossom:** Explore the Wellness Blossom for a Healthy Body, Peaceful Mind, Vibrant Spirit and Balanced Emotions.
 - ♥ **Assessments:** Complete the assessments for each of the Blossom Petals:
 - Stress & Weight
 - Stress & Self-Care
 - Stress & Life Purpose
 - Stress & Emotions
 - ♥ **Coaching Consult:** Sign up for a coaching consultation with Patricia – it's free, over the phone, with no obligation.
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