

**Table 5.2 from Fairburn CG, *Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Eating Disorders*, Guilford Press, New York, 2008.**

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### **Instructions for Self-Monitoring**

During treatment, it is important that you record everything that you eat or drink, and what is going on at the time. We call this ‘self-monitoring’. Its purpose is two-fold: first, it provides a detailed picture of how you eat, thereby bringing to your attention and that of your therapist the exact nature of your eating problem; and second, by making you more aware of what you are doing at the very time that you are doing it, self-monitoring helps you change behavior which may previously have seemed automatic and beyond your control. Accurate “real-time” monitoring is central to treatment. It will help you change.

At first, writing down everything that you eat may be irritating and inconvenient, but soon it will become second nature and of obvious value. We have yet to encounter anyone whose lifestyle made it truly impossible to monitor. Regard it as a challenge.

Look at the sample monitoring record to see how to monitor. A new record (or records) should be started each day.

- The first column is for noting the time when you eat or drink anything, and the second is for recording the nature of the food and drink consumed. Calories should not be recorded: instead, you should write down a simple (non-technical) description of what you ate or drank. Each item should be written down as soon as possible after it was consumed. Recalling what you ate or drank some hours afterwards will not work since it will not help you change your behavior at the time. Obviously, if you are to record in this way, you will need to carry your monitoring sheets with you. It does not matter if your records become messy or if the writing or spelling is not good. The important thing is that you record everything you eat or drink, as soon as possible afterwards.
- Episodes of eating that you view as meals should be identified with brackets. Snacks and other episodes of eating should not be bracketed.
- The third column should specify where the food or drink was consumed. If this was in your home, the room should be specified.
- Asterisks should be placed in the fourth column adjacent to any episodes of eating or drinking that you felt (at the time) were excessive. This is your judgment, regardless of what anyone else might think. It is essential to record all the food that you eat during “binges”.
- The fifth column is for recording when you vomit (write ‘V’) or take laxatives (write ‘L’ and the number taken) or diuretics (water tablets) (write ‘D’ and the number taken).
- The last column will be used in various ways during treatment. For the moment it should be used as a diary to record events and feelings that have influenced your eating: for example, if an argument precipitated a binge or led you not to eat, you should note that down. Try to write a brief comment every time you eat, recording your thoughts and feelings about what you ate. You may want to record other important events or circumstances in this column, even if they had no effect on your eating. The last column should also be used to record your weight (and your thoughts about it) each time that you weigh yourself.

Every treatment session will include a detailed review of your latest monitoring sheets. You must therefore remember to bring them with you!

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