13 Elements of

# CONTROL AROUND FOOD

Overcome food cravings, overeating and constant thoughts about food and transition into full control of your appetite.



Our food challenges are not about willpower, they're not even about food.

# 13 ELEMENTS OF
# CONTROL AROUND FOOD

When most people feel out of control with their hunger, appetite, food cravings and food choices, they usually feel the need to find a diet or a meal plan to limit their food. While to a certain degree there is a point to it, for many others this has the opposite effect. Restricting food and calories while following strict dietary rules and exercising more creates the opposite effect. **The more they are trying to control, the more they feel out of control.** Most people know how to eat healthy and yet, they feel there is somethign else that leads to their decision to eat more than what their body requires or choose the food they know doesn't make them feel good. That's because our food, weight and body problems are not about food.

There are thirteen elements that influence our food choices, appetite, cravings, fat storage and overeating urges.  What this means is a person could make all the efforts in the world, follow the newest diet, visit a nutritionist for a diet plan and going the gym, yet if the underlying factors that drive our decisions to eat haven't been addressed, we can stay stuck in a constant cycle of dieting and losing track to only feel like a failure.

When we talk about control with food, we are talking about looking at the mind of the eater and who we truly are as an eater. It's about recognizing that our eating challenges are intimately connected to different facets of being human:  relationships, family, work, money, sexuality, spirituality, our search for fulfilment and much more.

Diet and nutrition is only one aspect of change. It's only when we address the root cause of the problem, change our brain and habits through the power of psychology and positive and life-affirming strategies that deliver real transformation and lasting satisfaction.

# 13 ELEMENTS OF CONTROL AROUND FOOD

Our food challenges are not about willpower, it's not even about food.

It's about identifying the underlying elements that sabotage our goals to then correct the individual factors so healthy eating becomes effortless. In the process, you are rewiring the brain and teaching your body for optimum weight to free yourself from your struggles around food, body and weight.

## PHYSICAL TRIGGERS

1. Blood Sugar Imbalance
2. Current Food Choices
3. Gut Bacteria

## BIOLOGICAL TRIGGERS

4. Brain Reward / Pleasure
5. Diets and Restrictions
6. Hormones

## PSYCHOLOGICAL TRIGGERS

7. Body Image / Weight Focus
8. Sensory Triggers
9. Emotional Triggers
10. Beliefs and Negative Self-Talk
11. Coping Mechanism
12. Routine and Patterns
13. Habits

# PHYSICAL TRIGGERS

## Blood Sugar Fluctuation

When we consume food our blood sugar increases. Foods like pasta, white bread or muffins can spike our blood sugar past normal ranges. When glucose falls rapidly, we might feel tired and often crave something sweet again. Afternoon slumps or nighttime cravings can often be a consequence. If your regular go-to is food or coffee, this shoots your glucose up again and you are on the blood sugar roller coaster. Blood sugar fluctuation contributes to simple carbs and sugar cravings and increases appetite. By understanding how to balance food, we can control our appetite, cravings and blood sugar. This will make it easier to lose weight and prevent or reverse a number of health problems.

## Current Food  Choices

A lot of the food we buy at the supermarket contain additives, flavour enhancers, high fructose corn syrup, sugar, colourings, etc. By enhancing the flavour our taste buds get used to stronger flavours. When high palatable food such as high in salt, fat and sugar is the main diet, natural food can be bland.

Enhanced flavours impact the Brain Reward and Pleasure centre which can make us feel less in control and lead to overeating or compulsive eating.  We don’t experience an addictive behavioural response to naturally occurring foods like strawberries or grapes. Food also changes our gut flora and what we crave (see Gut Bacteria).

Therefore, our current food choices will have an impact on the type of food we desire. Knowing that, we can navigate what we eat and what we crave.

## Gut Bacteria

Different bacteria in our gut craves different things: yeast craves sugar, bacteroidetes enjoy fat, prevotella love carbs and bifidobacteria are fibre fiends. They each have their own way of signaling their favourite food by influencing our food choice and asking for their favourite meal. Microbes really know how to mold our cravings and unfortunately, they are not always in our favour. Refined modern foods pose a problem for the gut, as they tend to shift bacterial growth in unfavourable ways.

One particular study even found that people who were overweight had a lower presence of a gut bacteria species called Bacteroidetes, whereas those who were leaner had higher numbers of the species.

When our microbe is healthy, people naturally choose food that is difficult to overconsume due to the satiating quality of these foods. Altering your gut bacteria profile can improve your energy, appetite, mood and how our clothes fit. With a few small changes it is possible to “reset” your gut bacteria so they are far more supportive of your health.

# BIOLOGICAL TRIGGERS

## Brain  reward / pleasure

Our brain is wired to seek pleasure and reward and avoid pain. We will naturally seek out activities that create pleasure. Food stimulates the reward system in the brain which releases the feel-good hormone dopamine. This is how we start feeling "addicted" to the way food makes us feel. Even just looking or thinking about food releases dopamine and drives our motivation to eat until this need is satisfied. This is why we can't stop thinking about yummy food until it's gone. Being aware of how we respond to food and what drives our decisions, we can take the power back and regain control again.

## Diets and restrictions

Almost every restriction is followed by overeating or binge eating.

A common scenario is afternoon, night and weekend overeating episodes. Often this can be the consequence of not eating enough calories during the day/week and restricting certain foods or food groups.

When calories are reduced throughout the day, intentionally or unintentionally, our bodies will try to find a way to catch up. The brain will fixate on opportunities to get food until this need is satisfied. Food will become more appealing than usual to a point of obsession and a high drive to consume food.

Food rules create psychological and perceived restrictions which make "forbidden" food more appealing. The more we avoid eating food we actually enjoy, the more this food will control us. By integrating this food regularly into our diet, it loses its grip on us.

## Hormones

Too many women know the impact of hormones during their menstrual cycle. Excess of estrogen and low levelsof  progesterone (between ovulation and menstruation; the second stage of the cycle) and this contributes to symptoms such as heavy, clotty, painful periods, bloating, mood changes, poor sleep and more anxious feelings prior to menstruation, PMS, and challenging perimenopause symptoms. Not to mention making it difficult for their body to utilise body fat effectively as a fuel. Both estrogen and progesterone have a strong influence on how we feel, look. Ideal progesterone levels also support optimum usage of body fat for energy.

# PSYCHOLOGICAL TRIGGERS

## Body image / Weight focus

Poor Body Image is the second main trigger for binge eating and overeating. Studies show that people who dislike their body, are more likely to diet or purge to control their body shape and weight. This often results in overeating which goes back to the trigger #5 - Diets and Restrictions.

Individuals who are very preoccupied with their body, often tend to do the following multiple times a day:

- Body checking
- Overly focused on weight and shape management
- Strong focus on external appearance
- Devaluing own worth based on shape changes
- Comparison with others

Poor body image often leads to negative self-talk, withdrawal from social activities, low self-esteem and a sense of loneliness. For some, it can trigger eating for comfort or to forget and others strong desire to go on another crash diet or self-punishment with exercise.

## Sensory Triggers

We can be triggered to eat food through:

- Seeing
- Smelling
- Tasting
- Hearing about food

You might have experienced in the past that you didn't think about food and weren't even hungry until you saw a delicious piece of cake, smelled freshly bakes cookies, tried yummy chocolate and then couldn't stop. In all mentioned circumstances you ate because you were triggered through one of your senses.

## Emotional Triggers

Stress, anxiety, anger, sadness, boredom and even happiness can often lead to emotional eating.

If for any reason we don't feel comfortable with our emotions, in this moment, we eat because we want to change how we feel. We want to soothe, comfort or distract ourselves from our emotions.

Think about this, when we eat mindlessly or binge, we are not really feeling our feelings, are we? We also don't usually eat because we are hungry, so how do we know when to stop, if we are not hungry in the first place?

Consequently, we ignore our hunger cues and numb emotional signals. Doing it over and over again will cause our brains to stop communicating with us.

After a while, we will find it harder and harder to experience a wide range of emotions - which includes happiness, sadness, anger, frustration, a sense of gratitude and contentment.

A lot of people also find it hard to notice when they are hungry or full.

So, we need to go back to listening to our bodies. Reconnect with ourselves, our feelings, our emotions and hunger cues.

## Beliefs and negative self-talk

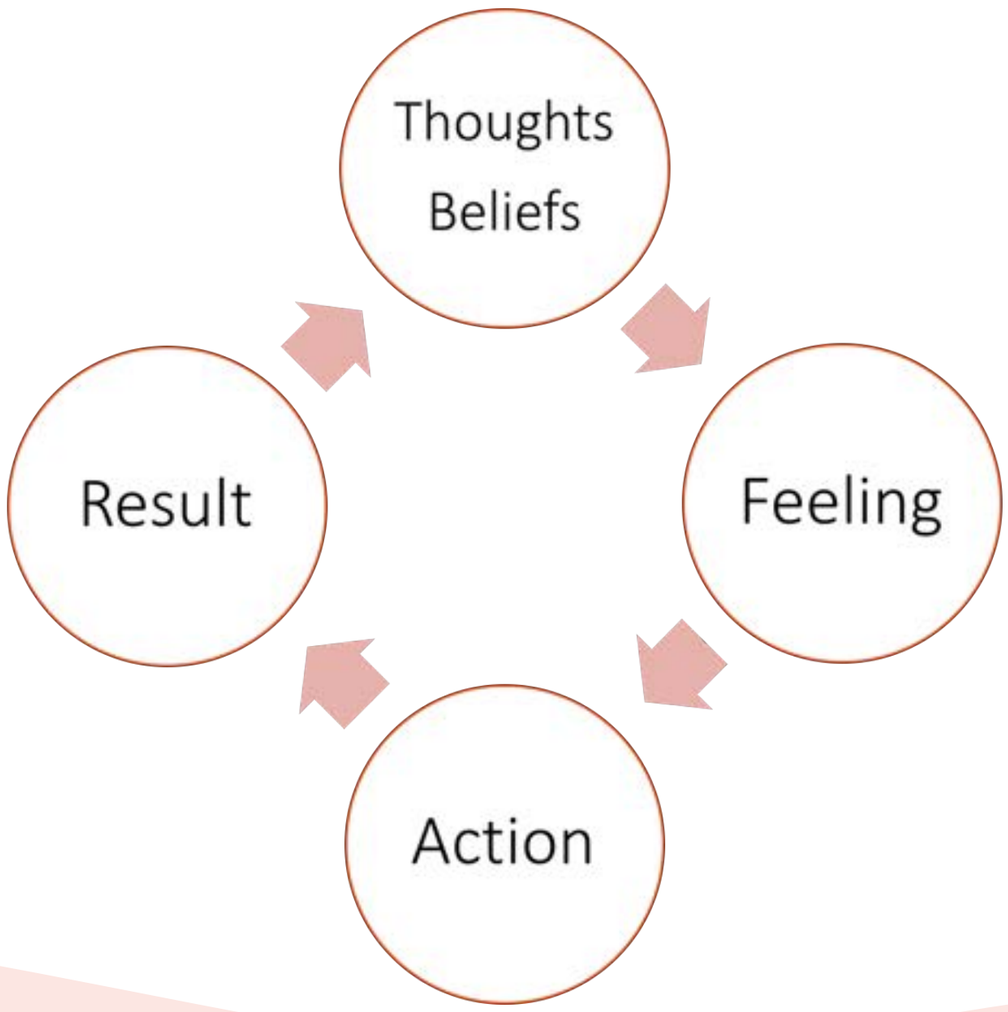
When food becomes our coping mechanism in emotional and difficult situations, negative self-talk can be a big trigger of using food for comfort. Some people call it emotional eating.

Sometimes people are carrying a story that is holding them trapped which needs to be identified. Challenge your beliefs and your thoughts. What is the message that you keep telling yourself?

Do you believe that you are not lovable as long as you have the body you have now?  Do you believe you need to be thin to be loved, attractive and beautiful? Do you feel that you need to lose weight to fit in and be accepted by others?

Are you waiting to have fun, to be happy and do all those things you always wanted to do until you lose weight? Are you beating yourself up after having the "naughty" food or does it only make you want more?

All these thoughts and beliefs can make you miserable, lonely and unhappy. As a consequence, you end up eating food to make you feel good. It is your friend, your lover and your entertainer. As long as it doesn't change, it will be hard to stop using food for comfort.



## Coping Mechanism

Eating can become a coping mechanism that we have developed over time. For some, it starts in childhood, for others when they experience traumatic events in their lives.

We create this coping mechanism to numb and distract ourselves from uncomfortable feelings we experience. It is our "go-to" behaviour - it is also a developed habit.

For example:

Bored = Food
Sad = Food
Stressed = Food

The brain has developed neural pathways that are firing to execute a certain behaviour when a certain feeling or emotion is experienced.

It can also be self-sabotaging behaviour when we experience happiness and deep down believe we don't deserve to feel that way.

## Routine and Patterns

There is always a pattern in what we do. Our brain's way to preserve energy is to create habits, routines and patterns. We always brush our teeth in the same way, we drive to work the same route, every morning when we wake up our routine is always the same or when we come home from work.

We also tend to eat or go for food mindlessly in a certain pattern, certain time of the day, after certain activities or the lack of it.

By observing and building awareness around our patterns, we can start breaking them and make conscious choices that allow us to live our lives the way we want, instead of only reacting to old habits.

## Habbits

When we do something for long enough, it becomes a habit. Repetitive behaviour wires our brain. The more we have repeated the same thought, or behaviour the more likely we are going to do it again without even thinking. It will happen on auto-pilot.

This is how we find ourselves buying chocolate every time we are at a certain petrol station or walk past the chocolate aisle at the supermarket.

Habits initiated by a trigger, which follows with behaviour and if that gives a reward, it's likely that we are going to do it again and again.

Example:
you feel bored, you eat, you feel entertained.

By breaking old habits and creating new ones, we can rewire the brain so that healthy is easy and natural to us.





# About Eugenia

Eating Psychology Specialist, Eugenia Nikiforow (BusPsy) is the founder of Unlox'U - Eating Psychology Clinic, TEDx speaker, integrative nutritionist and NLP practitioner. Her practical and supportive program **Solve The Overeating Puzzle** has helped hundreds of women around the world find freedom with food, their body and weight by teaching them to identify and address the underlying reasons for their food cravings, overeating urges, constant worries and thoughts around food and binge eating episodes. They learn the exact steps, tools and strategies to correct the factors.

Eugenia graduated from a University in Germany with a Bachelor of Science in business psychology majoring in coaching and human development.  She specialised in NLP, CBT and ACT. She then furthered her education through the Integrative Institute of Nutrition in New York, receiving a Holistic Nutrition Certificate where she was trained in more than 100 dietary theories.

She is a TEDx speaker and is regularly featured in magazines such as NEXT, NZ Good Healthy Choices, Now To Love and more. She speakson national and international podcasts and is a contributor as a guest blogger for AwesomeInc, Voices of Hope, Seed + Soul, Consciously Living .

Eugenia's work is unique and groundbreaking combining three pillars of nutrition, psychology and brain science to create lasting behavioural changes by rewiring the brain to regain control with food.

# REWIRED TO EAT

## Turn off your food cravings, tame your appetite & stop overeating



An online program and framework that teaches you how to have it all:

**BE IN CONTROL OF EATING AND EAT CHOCOLATE**

If you are ready to diver deeper into rewiring your appetite, tame your hunger and stop the crazy sugar and carbs cravings, check out our
Rewire To Eat Online Program

For PEACE OF MIND with FOOD so you can end your addiction to sugar and carbs and can stop thinking about food all the time...

For a limited time ...

... we are offering our Rewired To Eat Online program for only $17.95
Value $75

For more info, got our website: www.unloxu.nz/courses.

Limited intake, find our more at www.unloxu.nz/courses.

unloxu.nz

UNLOX'U

*Mind*
WITH A ~~DIET~~ PLAN

*Solve* THE *Overeating Puzzle*