

ASSESSMENT OF AN INTUITIVE EATING EDUCATION TOOL FOR MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

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Introduction

Background

Obesity rates in the military impact health, performance, and readiness. Intuitive Eating (IE), a non-diet mindset, may be of value to military service members as this approach has been linked to improvements in health, BMI, weight stability, and a reduced risk of disordered eating and negative body image.

Purpose

To assess an Intuitive Eating education tool tailored specifically to military service members.

Development and Evaluation

Development

An education tool applying the ten principles of IE was designed to address active-duty military service members' unique needs.

Evaluation

Separate questionnaires were designed to gather feedback on the quality of the education tool based on the Designing and Assessing Nutrition Education Handouts checklist (1). Feedback was collected from registered dietitians (n=10) and active-duty military service members (n=27).

Evaluation Results

Feedback from Military Service Members	Yes	No
Easy to read and engaging	27	0
Makes you want to improve your relationship with food and food choices	27	0
Information is relevant to you	27	0
You relate to the information	27	0
You relate to the pictures/images	26	1
Overall message is positive	26	1
Contains words that are uncommon or unfamiliar	1	26
Layout is easy to follow and understand	25	2

INTUITIVE EATING FOR MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

10 Steps for Developing a Healthy Relationship with Food While Meeting Your Performance Goals



1 REJECT THE DIET MENTALITY

Say 'NO' to diets and fasts that promise quick results. Overly restrictive eating can be particularly harmful, increasing the risk for:

- Dehydration
- Injury
- Illness
- Stress

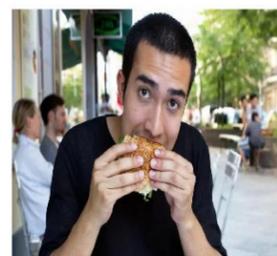
HONOR YOUR HUNGER
Eat when hungry to fuel your body. Service members have unique physical demands and must meet weight and body composition standards. Eat when you are hungry to control hunger, prevent overeating, and improve energy and performance, which are essential to performing your duties. Eating due to stress or frustration instead of hunger can lead to excess food intake.



3 MAKE PEACE WITH FOOD

No more forbidden foods. Labeling foods as 'bad' can lead to feelings of deprivation and a cycle of craving and bingeing. Reduce cravings and the urge to binge by permitting yourself to enjoy the foods you want to eat in moderation. Avoid having guilty thoughts after allowing yourself to enjoy the chosen food.

CHALLENGE THE FOOD POLICE
Rethink your beliefs about dieting. Challenge rules learned about eating from inaccurate nutrition information from the internet or family and friends that lead to feelings of failure. Consult a Registered Dietitian for credible nutrition information and assistance with making realistic changes.



5 DISCOVER THE SATISFACTION FACTOR

Find satisfaction in eating foods you enjoy. Food should be nourishing as well as enjoyable. Eat slowly, and savor the taste, texture, and aroma of foods to increase enjoyment. Choose foods you enjoy to increase your satisfaction and eat when moderately hungry to avoid overeating.



6 FEEL YOUR FULLNESS

Listen to your body to check on your fullness. Eat slowly and avoid distractions that you may be more aware of your fullness and the need to end the meal. Be sure to 'Honor your Hunger,' making it easier to eat mindfully. Avoid cleaning your plate and realize that you can eat again later when you are hungry.

HONOR EMOTIONS WITHOUT USING FOOD

Find healthy ways to manage stress without using food. Service members are prone to stressful situations. Stress can cause some to overeat or skip meals and others not eat enough. Explore ways to manage stress without food. Consider activities such as exercise, meditation, reading, and spending time with family or friends.



8 RESPECT YOUR BODY

Appreciate your body's uniqueness. Think about what your body can do, and appreciate how it functions. Avoid comparing yourself to others which can lead to negative feelings. Honor and respect your differences to overcome the urge to deprive or punish your body.

EXERCISE-FEEL THE DIFFERENCE

Enjoy all of the benefits of exercise. Exercise for performance and to take care of yourself, manage stress, and improve sleep. Make exercise fun and convenient by joining a sports team, training for a marathon, or participating in leisure activities such as bowling, hiking, and bicycling.



10 HONOR YOUR HEALTH

Chose foods to improve your health and enjoyment of food. Balance your intake of all foods and eat a variety of foods. Ensure food meets your nutrition needs and include some foods in moderation for gentle nutrition. Step away from the diet mentality to honor your health without the stress of dieting.

Using these Intuitive Eating strategies, you can overcome the pitfalls of dieting and increase success with meeting your goals.

Tribole, E., & Resch, E. (2020). Intuitive Eating: A Revolutionary Anti-Diet Approach (4th ed.). New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Evaluation Results

Feedback from Registered Dietitians	Yes	No
Easy to read and engaging	9	1
Infographic promotes intuitive eating among service members	9	1
Information is relative to the target audience	10	0
Service members will be able to relate to the information	10	0
Words are commonly used among service members	9	1
Infographic is free of jargon	10	0
Overall message is positive	10	0
Content is organized in a logical way	9	1
Reading level is appropriate for the target audience	9	1
Content is consistent with evidence-based practice	10	0
Content is consistent with Dietary Guidelines for Americans	8	2

Content Feedback Themes

I believe it can plant the seed of understanding. (Dietitian)
This handout is certainly a step in the right direction. (Dietitian)
It motivates me because I make myself feel guilty about the foods I enjoy (Service member)
It helps me to see that I can enjoy foods I enjoy in a healthy way. (Service member)
Makes me want to improve. (Service member)
Definitely honor your hunger is a change I plan to make. (Service member)

Conclusions

- The findings suggest the tool was perceived as positive, relatable, readable, and able to promote IE in service members.
- Future steps include an evaluation of IE and the tool concerning improving eating patterns and body image among service members.

Reference

1. Hand, R. K., Medrow, L., & Brown, K. (2015). Developing and Assessing Nutrition Education Handouts (DANEH): Testing the validity and reliability of the new tool. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 115(5), 816-823.