

EXERCISE 1: DECISIONAL BALANCING

The most important reasons why I want to change my current eating patterns are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

This pamphlet is intended to help you

- Think about the Costs and Benefits of your eating patterns, and
- Think about what is involved in your decision to change

WEIGHING DECISIONS

When you weigh decisions, you are looking at the costs and benefits of whatever you are doing — whether it is deciding to go to school, deciding to get married, or deciding to reduce your alcohol use.

You may have been having problems with your eating patterns up to now because you believe the benefits of continuing your current patterns outweigh the costs of changing.

Weighing decisions involves personal choices. What may be a benefit to you may be a cost to someone else. When weighing decisions, having mixed feelings is normal.

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are the results of your eating patterns. They can be both negative and positive.

Surprisingly, some people are able to change their eating patterns without treatment. When people who change on their own are asked what brought about the change, they often say they just “thought about it.” People often do things as a result of decisions they make. They evaluate the consequences of continuing their current behavioral patterns (decisional balancing) before making the final decision to change.

This is exactly what you can do. Think of a weight scale with the costs (negatives) of your current eating patterns on one side, and the benefits (positives) on the other side. If the costs and benefits are equal, there is nothing compelling you to change. If you keep adding weights to either side, an imbalance will occur.

To change, you need to tip the scale so that the negatives outweigh the positives.

Changing Your Current Eating Patterns

This process is called Decisional Balancing. We do it all the time: weighing the pros and cons of change. For example, people weigh the pros and cons of making changes in their jobs or relationships. Making decisions about whether to change your eating patterns, and how much, is the same as making decisions about other areas of your life.

THINKING ABOUT CHANGING

In thinking about your eating patterns, ask yourself: What do I stand to lose (and gain) by continuing my pattern? What role does my eating play in my life? At some point, you may have received real benefits from your current patterns— relaxation, fun, stress reduction. However, since you are now reading this, you are reconsidering these benefits and focusing on the costs of your behavior.

DECISION TO CHANGE EXERCISE

One of the things that can help you clarify your thoughts about your current eating patterns is to list all the benefits and costs of changing or continuing your current pattern of eating. Look at the example below, and it will help you complete your own Decision to Change Exercise.

REMEMBER:

It's your decision to change! You are the one who must decide what it will take for you to tip the scale in favor of change.

SAMPLE DECISION TO CHANGE EXERCISE

	Changing	Not Changing
Benefits of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased control over my life • Support from family and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More relaxed • More fun at parties • Don't have to think about my problems
Costs of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased stress/anxiety • Feel more depressed • Increased boredom • Sleeping problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disapproval from friends/family • Money problems • Increased health risks

DECISION TO CHANGE EXERCISE

	Changing	Not Changing
Benefits of		
Costs of		

Now that you have filled in the costs and benefits of your current eating patterns, take a few minutes to compare the benefits to the costs.

Are the costs worth it?

In thinking about what is involved in your decision to change your eating patterns, you can use the last page of this pamphlet to list the most important reasons why you want to change.