



# What is Your Body Telling You?

## A Castlewood Unique Approach

*Castlewood*  
Treatment Centers for Eating Disorders  
[www.CastlewoodTC.com](http://www.CastlewoodTC.com)  
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If you or someone you know needs treatment for an eating disorder, please call 866.582.7535 or email [info@castlewoodtc.com](mailto:info@castlewoodtc.com).



### Rediscover

#### Rediscovering Hunger and Fullness

Hunger and fullness is your body's built-in fuel gauge - your body's communication signals that tell you what fuel your body needs and when it needs it. But in the early stages of recovery, hearing and trusting your fuel gauge is very hard. Science tells us that an eating disorder distorts and confuses your brain and stomach's ability to communicate. Science also tells us that as your brain and stomach heal, your body can relearn how to hear and trust hunger and fullness messages. When your body can trust its own fuel gauge, your metabolism settles into a gentle cycle that sustains energy, restores health and strengthens recovery.



### Redefine

#### Define Hunger/Fullness Differently to Rebuild a Relationship with Your Body

##### Is your definition extreme? Or balanced?

- Do you notice hunger only when it feels so suddenly painful that your stomach must be eating itself, and your panic reaches for the first bite it can find?
- Do you notice fullness only when it feels like your stomach is stretched to the point of no return, and your shame matches it?

##### Is your definition balanced? If your definition for hunger and fullness is both sides of the extreme, you can redefine it!

- Balanced hunger is the calm clear voice saying "hello" to start a conversation, and the alert mind to decide what and how much fuel is invited to join you.
- Balanced fullness is the same calm clear voice saying "I enjoyed the conversation" as you embraced both nourishment and pleasure, and "see you when it's time again!"



### Reconnect

#### Meal timing + Fuel Balance + Repetition = Rediscovered Hunger and Fullness

##### WHY fuel your body every 3-4 hours?

- Heals your brain
- Stabilizes your metabolism
- Sustains your energy
- Clarifies your thoughts

##### WHY balance your fuel choices?

- Honors nourishment & pleasure
- Removes the judgment
- Eliminates the "good/bad" food lists that disrupt your recovery

##### WHY repeat the pattern?

- Reduces your physical cravings
- Reveals your emotional cravings
- Builds a strong foundation for your recovery



#### Empty

When you panic from the stress and anxiety of running out of gas (food) and it doesn't matter how much or what kind of gas (food) it is, you need it NOW.



#### 1/4 Tank

When you notice your fuel gauge needle is lower (gradual hunger getting your attention) but you have time to calmly choose the gas station (meal or snack) that has the fuel (food) that best fits your needs.



#### 1/2 Tank

When you are concentrating on driving (living!) and enjoying the ride (neither hungry or full), with only a brief glance at the gauge, making a mental note that you will need gas (food) down the road.



#### 3/4 Tank

When you are content and assured that your car (body) has what it needs and your full attention turns to the road ahead, ignoring any gas station (meal or snack) you pass along the way.



#### Full

When your fuel tank is at maximum capacity, cannot hold another drop, and any extra fuel (food) will overflow the tank yet still charge the credit card.



# Emotional Versus Physical Hunger

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A consistently fueled body is not triggered by physical food cravings. If physical cravings are reduced, any emotional triggers can be seen for what they really are – emotional urges to use food to numb, distract or “feed” a feeling, not a physical need. **With meal timing + fuel balance + repetition**, you are building a foundation from which you can experience both nourishment and pleasure in your fuel choices and eating experiences. You are moving towards the recovery goal of eating intuitively and mindfully.

As you restore your relationship with food, choose curiosity. Choose to face conflicting thoughts and food fears with an attitude of “Hmm, I wonder what THAT means?” Ask your body, “What are you telling me now?” Push through the distorted messages and food fears and trust your new eating pattern to do its healing work.



**When a food craving hits, you can check whether it is physical or emotional by asking yourself these questions:**

- Am I fueling my body every 3 to 4 hours? If so, is it balanced fuel?
- Do I notice a steady energy level when I consistently eat every 3 to 4 hours?
- Do I notice an overall decrease in my anxiety level when I consistently eat every 3 to 4 hours?

**If NO to any of the above:**

- Work with your dietitian to balance the variety and amount of fuel you are providing your body.
- Stay curious and notice what and when you experience a craving.
- Practice the “Four Steps to Rediscovery” below as soon as you become aware of the craving.

**If YES to all the above, more often than not, your body is learning to re-regulate your sense of hunger-fullness.**

- Tell yourself, “I am learning to trust balanced fuel and meal timing to do its healing work.”
- Stay curious and notice how different fuel combinations feel and sustain your body.
- Stay curious and notice how you respond differently to unexpected stress when eating every 3 to 4 hours.

## ✓ Steps to Rediscover Emotional Versus Physical Hunger:

### 1. Name it.

State precisely what it is you are experiencing and say it out loud. “I’m aware that I’m craving... (list the food(s) you want right now).”

### 2. Explain it.

“This food craving is not from my stomach. It wants to meet a real emotional need I have. My craving is from... (loneliness, anger, boredom...)”

### 3. See it.

See yourself responding in harmony with your recovery. “I see myself eating regular meals and snacks without judgment as my body moves closer to recovery.”

### 4. Choose it.

Make an empowered choice without judgment. Embrace the opportunity to learn about yourself.

### ➡ Choosing NOT to feed the emotional craving? Tell yourself:

- “I choose not to feed this craving now because my body isn’t physically asking for it.”
- “I choose to feed my emotion with an alternative of . . . instead of food.”
- “I choose to sit in the discomfort and be gentle with myself as it passes.”

### ➡ Choosing TO feed the emotional craving? Tell yourself:

- “I choose to be present and fully engaged through this emotional experience.
- “I choose to learn more about myself by embracing self-compassion for what I am needing right now.”
- “I choose to eat my next regularly planned meal or snack to support my recovery.”

**Focus:** Use intentional focused effort and shift your attention to something meaningful and productive. Immerse your mind as fully as possible into something other than the craving. Regardless of which choice you make, tell yourself, “I embrace my recovery journey, and I see myself finding balance and restoring trust in my food and my body.”