STRATEGIES TO ESTABLISH HEALTHY EATING

2. The 3 Hour Rule: that is, that in order to prevent hunger and hypoglycaemia in the period where the re-establishment of healthy eating is the goal, the individual should go no longer then 3 (maximum 4!) hours without eating something. Explain that someone whose body is starving (this is anyone who has been using restriction frequently) is more vulnerable to hunger and hypoglycaemia as the body interprets this in terms of the famine response. It is particularly important for people with bulimia/bingeing to try to establish this rule early in treatment; it will probably be a slower process in clients who are underweight. Be creative and persistent e.g. get the client to carry a packet of sultana’s in their handbag for those emergency times.
3. Review food diaries and look for omissions (i.e. food groups etc)
4. Establish Structure: If not already present begin by trying to establish a rudimentary 3 meal, 2-3 snack structure (morning tea and afternoon tea essential, supper preferable but optional – i.e. eating something every 3 hours). Begin with the meal the client feels most able to institute first (i.e. the least feared) and do so using ‘Goal Setting Strategies’ then gradually work until the structure is in place.
5. Establish Portion Sizes: Once the structure is established work at increasing the amount or types of food at each meal. This may involve skipping directly to the next step and beginning the introduction of feared foods to augment meals, or if portion sizes of the foods the individual is already eating are not normal then it will usually be desirable to work on increasing these first before commencing on the introduction of feared foods.
6. Introduce Feared Foods: Establish a list of foods currently eliminated from the diet (or absent except when bingeing) and place them in a hierarchy of least feared to most feared. Gradually start reintroducing them to the diet one by one. This should be done in a planned manner (please see ‘Goal Setting’).
7. Maintenance: Ensure that all the food groups are represented in the diet and that all feared foods have been tried and the fear habituated. Continue monitoring until a stable pattern has been observed for some months. Then while treatment is continuing get the person to continue without monitoring (this can sometimes be fearful for the client as they may have become reliant on monitoring).
8. Eliminate Dieting: Work towards eliminating dieting the ultimate goal being responding to hunger and satiety.