

pure belonging



DISCOVER
YOUR UNIQUE EMOTIONAL
EATING MAP

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Hello friend,
I am so glad you are here.

I am Galina, the author of *Peace with Self, Peace with Food* - a trauma healing approach for emotional eating. Today I am bringing you something really useful - an invitation to take this assessment and create your own Unique Emotional Eating Map.



Here is something I have discovered over the past 10 years working with people who struggle with emotional eating.

Emotional eating only looks like a barrier to well-being when we don't understand it. When we do, it becomes the path to the most compassionate self-care you could ever imagine.

My intention here is to help you really understand your patterns - so that you know how to support your body and find your unique path to peace with food.

If you have found yourself eating when stressed, lonely, or bored, if you have been disconnected from your body's signals and stuck in your head, you're not alone.

Many of us have learned to rely on food to ease our pain, find temporary comfort and numb uncomfortable feelings.

To make it worse, we feel flawed for turning to food and many of us get stuck in the vicious diet cycle - trying to fix the emotional eating habits that rule our lives with control, structure and discipline.

Unfortunately, this doesn't work for people whose bodies have been through overwhelming experiences and trauma.

While there is no shortage of cleanses and prepackaged food choices on the market, your body is not dealing with a shortage of quick fixes, but with trauma imprints and survival adaptations which have impacted your nervous system.

These adaptations take over to protect you and make it very challenging to know what you need and how to adequately meet your needs.

Yet, your struggle is not a mistake and it's not your fault.

Your body and your biology are infinitely intelligent and through each painful behavior your body is not just pointing you towards the root of the pain, it is also showing you the solution - it's guiding you to the exact way that you can take care of yourself.

Listen, you don't have to live fearing when the next emotional eating episode will take over your life. I know it may sound unbelievable, but there is a way out (and it's not what you have been doing).

What if I told you that there is a way to know exactly why you get stuck in patterns of emotional eating, restriction or avoidance, or giving food so much real estate in your mind.

As a somatic practitioner whose job is to help people's nervous systems recover, I have created a short self-study guide which invites you to explore and draw your unique emotional eating map.

With the help of this map you will understand how you get stuck in emotional eating patterns, what your body actually needs, and how to begin taking the first real steps on the path to peace with yourself and peace with food.

I am offering you a somatic approach to understanding how your nervous system states determine your relationship with everything – not just food and emotions, but with your overall capacity for self-care and the attuned meeting of all your needs.

In this self-assessment, we will break down each meal into four distinct phases, each of them showing you challenges you face and the resources you need to help yourself.

- 1) **Clarity**, which creates **Body Awareness**
- 2) **Effectiveness**, which enables **Mindful Choice**
- 3) **Satisfaction**, which allows **Somatic Presence**
- 4) **Relaxation**, which helps **with Ease and Digestion**

By taking yourself through this self-assessment, will uncover where your natural nourishment cycle is interrupted and what your body really needs to restore balance, so you can more easily connect with your needs and meet them with joy and satisfaction.

Throughout, I'll offer reflections and somatic tools to help you reconnect with your body – so you can clearly understand its signals, feel empowered to take nourishing action, and once again remember what it's like to truly savor your food and end a meal feeling satisfied and at peace.

Let's do this together!

Instructions:

This self-study guide is created so that you can connect your own observations and history with specific phases of the nourishment cycle and the nervous system states that accompany them.

Each phase of a meal is a part of the whole process of nourishment - from the moment of perceiving the need to eat, to the completion of the meal. This continuum from start to finish we refer to as "the nourishment cycle".

To begin your assessment, read through the statements in each section and check off the ones that often apply to you.

Notice which ones feel most familiar in your body or experience.

You may resonate with more than one statement, and you may find yourself land naturally in several of the phases. Totally normal!

Trust what feels true from experience as you learn about your Unique Emotional Eating Map.

At the end of each phase, I will be sharing a bit about the resources that can support you, so that you can help yourself and feel more at ease with each phase.

Clarity - Body Awareness

I know when I am hungry and what I need

- I often feel disconnected from my hunger signals.
- I can feel hungry or thirsty often, even after I just ate or drank.
- It's easier to eat the same thing over and over again, because choosing something new stresses me out too much.
- I can go from not hungry at to all of a sudden starving.
- I can cook for others and eat with others, but when I am alone I don't think to eat.
- I may not feel hunger all day, and then I overeat at night.
- I often rely on diet plans or meal plans to "have structure", otherwise I feel untethered and lost.
- I rely on external cues (what time of day it is, are other people eating) to know that it's time to eat.
- It's hard to know what foods would satisfy me or what I'm hungry for.

Clarity - Body Awareness

I know when I am hungry and what I need

- I often struggle to decide between several foods, even if they are familiar to me.
- When I have to rely on my internal hunger cues, I get lost in food noise and overthinking.
- I eat compulsively in response to internal sensations of discomfort, including anxiety, boredom, fatigue, emotion, etc.
- I have a hard time differentiating hunger from other internal cues.
- I seek feeling light and empty through cleanses, detoxes, or fasting.
- I like the empty and energized feeling when I don't eat during the day.
- I rely on others to tell me what, when or how to eat—trusting them more than my interpretations of my internal signals.
- I can't rely on my body to tell me what foods it needs.
- Sometimes I don't eat because the sensation of having food in my belly is overwhelming.

Clarity - Body Awareness

I know when I am hungry and what I need

- I have a hard time knowing what emotions I feel.
- I often study others in order to learn the rules of how to act in social situations.
- My body doesn't give me the right signals for when I am hungry or full.
- I can't tell the difference between hunger, thirst, boredom, anxiety, tiredness, etc.
- I feel overwhelmed when I have to make a weekly meal plan for myself, because I don't know what I will be wanting.
- It is hard to shop at the grocery store, because there is so much happening around me that I get overwhelmed and can't think.



If you checked more than 5 answers - you will benefit from increasing your capacity for
Clarity

Clarity is connected to interoception and the other two near senses. Being able to hear from the body clearly is often disrupted when we have a history of trauma or chronic hyperarousal or shutdown of the nervous system. To be able to know when you are hungry and what you need, you first need to strengthen the ability to perceive clear signals from your body.

To support the body's capacity for clarity I use:

- *Pushing movements – pressing against a wall or counter*
- *Kneeling planks or full plants*
- *Breathing while gently pushing the abdominal wall (with a physio ball or other light resistance)*
- *Warm and weighted compresses for the belly and body, baths, massage, craniosacral therapy and osteopathy*
- *Connecting with pleasant and neutral sensations in the body*
- *Grounding exercises and practices that establish a sense of connection with the Earth*

Effectiveness - Mindful Choice

I feel secure and confident in expressing what I want and need

- Even if I know what I want and need to buy, it's hard for me to get up and go to the grocery store.
- Preparing meals is difficult for me, so I often rely on pre-prepared foods.
- I feel overwhelmed when I have to make a weekly meal plan for myself, because I don't know how I will be able to follow through.
- If someone else prepares nourishing food I enjoy it, but I very rarely have energy or motivation to make it myself.
- Cooking and cleaning after cooking stresses me out, so sometimes I don't eat what I am really hungry for.
- When making food requires more energy than I have, I eat foods that are easy to get, but don't provide sustainable energy and replenish me.
- I often feel frustrated and angry at having to buy or make food.
- I often reach for packaged foods, even though I don't feel good after eating them.

Effectiveness - Mindful Choice

I feel secure and confident in expressing what I want and need

- I often second-guess my food choices - like I can't win.
- I feel caught between what I crave and what looks good and what I should have.
- I struggle to act on my body's cues with confidence and ease.
- Even when I have emotions, I have a really hard time showing them and processing them with other people.
- I have a history of bingeing or restriction or both.
- I'm always researching or thinking about the "best" way to eat.
- I feel out of control and feel like I have to eat if there is food available.
- I eat compulsively in response to internal sensations of discomfort, including boredom, emotion, etc.
- I am afraid that if I enjoy my food, I will lose control, so I often choose not to eat for fear of overeating.

Effectiveness - Mindful Choice

I feel secure and confident in expressing what I want and need

- I often overeat on foods that don't really hit the spot, so I have to eat a lot of them.
- I feel like I'm not allowed to enjoy my food.
- I avoid eating in places where other people might judge me for what I am eating and I prefer to eat at home and eat alone.
- I am very attuned to what other people need and I have been told I am a good caregiver, but struggle to do the same for myself.
- I often can't tell that I have already done enough, and take on more tasks than I can manage. I have a hard time sensing that I need to say no.



If you checked more than 5 answers - you will benefit from increasing your capacity for Effectiveness

Difficulties with Effectiveness are most often connected to deficits in the environment and a barrier to directly meeting needs by expressing them. Instead of direct expression of needs, we see dependencies in relationships, indirect ways of meeting needs, over-control and under-control, overdoing or deprivation.

To support the somatic capacity for effectiveness I use:

- *Engaging the ability to reach - both in the context of giving and receiving*
- *Exploring verbal and non-verbal communication of needs and supporting the body to be stable in its expression*
- *Exploring the body's energetic space through reaching*
- *Practicing choosing based on preferences by linking preferences to the senses (for sound, light, smells, touch, taste, balancing, etc.)*
- *Practicing saying No and Yes out loud or through the language of the body*

Satisfaction - Somatic Presence

I can stay aware of the process and sensations of eating, and notice when I am full

- I often eat quickly, and I don't chew my food enough; I can swallow without chewing.
- I struggle to make a meal plan that meets my needs and also the needs of my family.
- I regularly throw away leftovers and food, because I forget that they are in the refrigerator.
- I often go on a health kick and I get excited to buy lots of produce and good food, only to watch it go bad in the fridge and pantry.
- I often finish my meal and don't even notice if I enjoyed it.
- I rarely feel satisfied, even after a full meal.
- I am often in a fight - my body is enjoying the food, but my mind doesn't approve of what I am enjoying - like, I should only eat healthy foods.
- Once I have the food in front of me, I disconnect from myself and the meal and miss out on the pleasure of food entirely.

Satisfaction - Somatic Presence

I can stay aware of the process and sensations of eating, and notice when I am full

- I don't enjoy my food, I don't experience my food as pleasurable.
- I can't focus on what I am eating and my experience when I am around other people.
- I often struggle to give myself good things - like shopping for new clothes or getting my nails and hair done - it feels like I don't deserve good things.
- I am more comfortable being kind and generous to others than others being kind and generous to myself.
- I have a history of bingeing and purging/spitting and chewing/restriction.
- I have a history of bingeing or restriction or both.
- Even after I eat well, I stay tense or restless.



If you checked more than 5 answers - you will benefit from increasing your capacity for Satisfaction

Difficulties with satisfaction are most often connected to a lack of safety, and the need to protect from experiences and substances present in the environment. We often see a combination of unexpressed needs and emotions, and an inability to receive from the environment, even when safety and goodness are present.

To support the capacity for satisfaction I use:

- *Working with the grasp holding objects with different textures in the hands and exploring their impact on the body*
- *Grasping and pulling with a partner who offers stability and strength*
- *Movements that involve grasping and pulling objects toward the center of the body, and movements that pull the body toward objects*
- *Taking in warm liquids while observing body sensations at each phase*
- *Visualizing receiving warmth, light, an embrace, or kind words*

Relaxation - Ease and Digestion

I can stop eating when I am fed and let my body digest with ease.

- I get stressed when I need to eat out at restaurants, because I overeat or eat something that feels horrible in my body after I am done.
- I often eat on the go, like my whole body is sped up.
- I have a hard time knowing when I have had enough food and often under-eat or overeat.
- When I like how something tastes, I can keep eating and eating even though I can be painfully full.
- I often clean my plate, but then keep looking for something else - something sweet or salty.
- I eat when stressed - food helps me relax and feel less wired.
- I often lose all concentration and focus after I eat, so when I need to be alert I prefer to skip meals .
- I rarely feel a true "ahh" of satisfaction or rest.

Relaxation - Ease and Digestion

I can stop eating when I am fed and let my body digest with ease.

- Being full makes me anxious and unsettled.
- I have a history of over-exercising.
- I have a history of procrastinating.
- I keep thinking about what I ate (or didn't eat) long after my meal is done.
- I start thinking of the next meal as soon as I am done with the current meal.
- My body and mind don't seem to know how to relax around food.
- I prefer to snack on small things throughout the day, instead of having a whole meal.
- I have a history of bingeing or restriction or both.
- At the end of the day, I can't find the energy to prepare the food I want, so I prefer to order in and Door-Dash.

Relaxation - Ease and Digestion

I can stop eating when I am fed and let my body digest with ease.

- I feel out of control around food, like once I start eating, I won't be able to stop myself.
- I often eat past full, and only stop when I am very uncomfortable. I use food to ground myself or feel more like "me."
- My eyes are bigger than my stomach - I often eat more food than what feels good.
- I have trouble transitioning from my work to rest, food helps me with transitions.



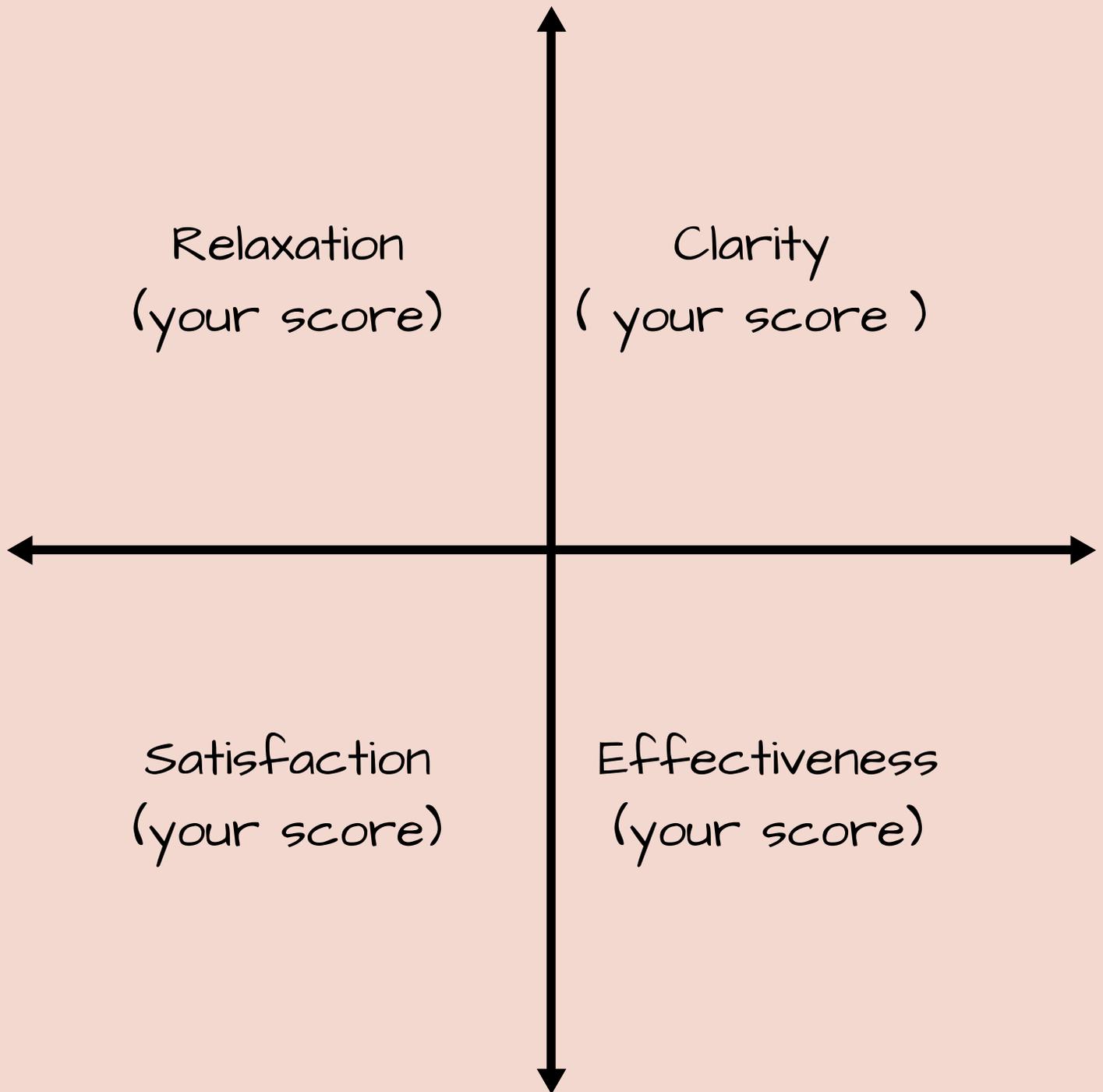
If you checked more than 5 answers - you will benefit from increasing your capacity for relaxation

Difficulties with relaxation are often connected to growing up in an environment that did not offer calm, where children and adults did not rest peacefully next to each other, and situations that may even have been threatening or neglectful. The system learns to be vigilant, to speed up instead of slow down at the completion of tasks, to fear and avoid endings.

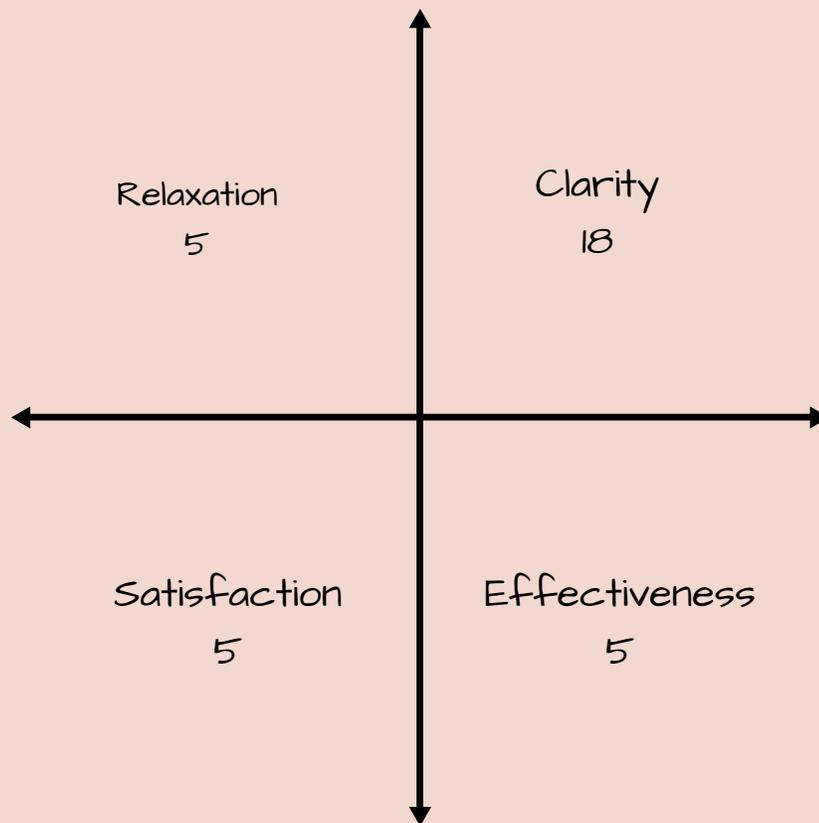
To support the capacity for relaxation I use:

- *Grounding practices – slow mindful floor exercises*
- *Practicing synchronizing breathing in the lungs with cellular breathing*
- *Lying on the ground in all 4 positions – on the belly, on the back, and on both sides*
- *Letting go into rest with active support from potentially supportive surfaces*
- *Support from the back body, support from the front body – with weighted objects or physio balls*
- *Finding contact with another person – experiencing it both inside the body and on the outside through the skin*

How to Make the Map



Hellen's Map



Hellen came to me distressed and ready to throw in the towel. She had been on tens of diets and had lost weight over and over again ("the same 50 lbs" - in her words). Her time on those diets wasn't lost though - through experience she found out that if she wasn't telling herself exactly what and when to eat, she often felt lost in her own body.

When she answered the questions above, we knew we had to start with increasing her capacity for Clarity.

Hellen struggled to tell what she felt or what she needed - whether it was around food, rest, or emotions.

When she wasn't on a determined plan, she would open the fridge multiple times without knowing what she wanted.

When she was off a plan she ate whatever was easiest, or whatever others ate, and then felt disconnected and confused afterward. Was that enough? Too much? It was hard to know.

Sometimes she felt hunger and anxiety as one single confusing sensation.

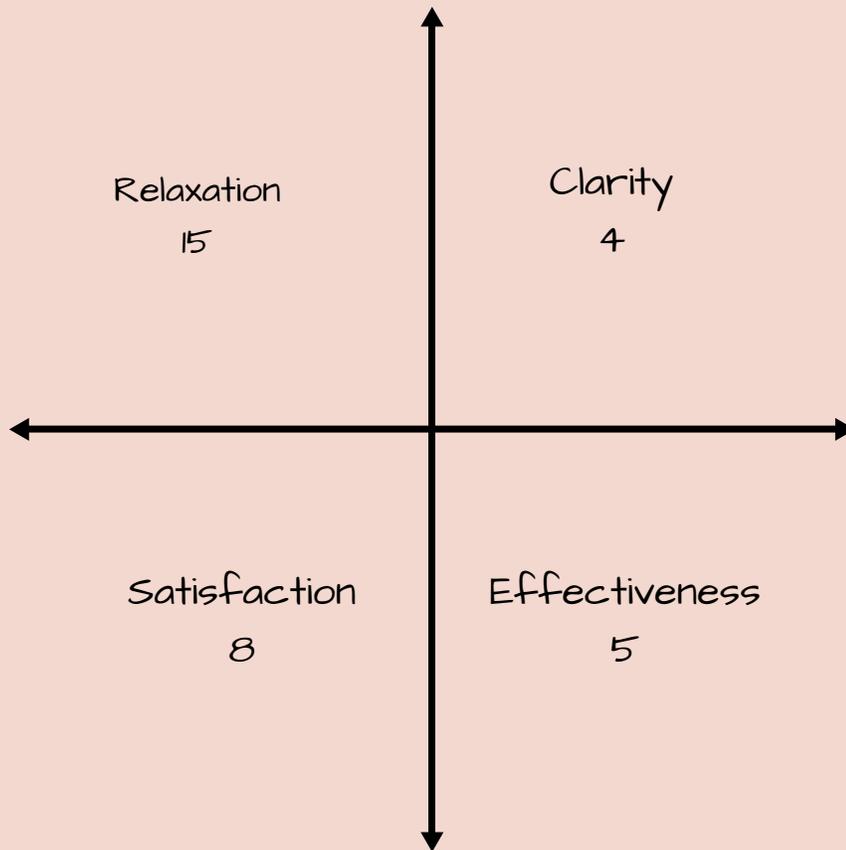
Somatically, the more I got to know Hellen, the more we could make sense of the numbness in her body, which alternated with stress or confusion. She has a long history of complicated abdominal surgeries, many scars, and the medical trauma associated with all that she had endured. On top of that, she had grown up in a family of stoics where there was little space for a sensitive girl.

“Disconnecting from myself made so much sense. Why would I want to feel in the first place, when everyone made me wrong about it?”

Hellen and I were able to focus on working with her interoceptive system and supported her to create a daily menu of sensory experiences, which let her system slowly thaw out of the numbness.

Over time, her ability to listen to her body and respond with care were restored. She is no longer living dependent on diets and external plans. Simple practices – like pushing, sitting on a physio-ball or connecting to pleasurable states in her body – over time – reconnected her with the wisdom that had always been there.

Daniel's Map



Daniel enjoyed food a lot - he never had trouble coming up with ideas for nourishing meals, he loved cooking for his wife and 3 teenage kids. But when it came to what happened at night, after a meal - he was at a loss.

"I know I am not hungry, per se, at least not for food... but after everyone goes to bed, all I can think of is what's in the pantry and fridge. Anything from cheese and crackers and salty nuts to chocolate and fruit popsicles goes."

"It's like your stomach is full, but you are still not done?" - I said.

As I worked with Daniel and we used this self-assessment, we discovered that he has a really hard time with two things: somatic transitions and letting down at night.

His busy job kept his mind busy, and he felt plenty stimulated by it in a very very satisfying way, but Daniel struggled to feel settled in his body - he couldn't remember a time in his life where he enjoyed downtime, letting his body soften and relax.

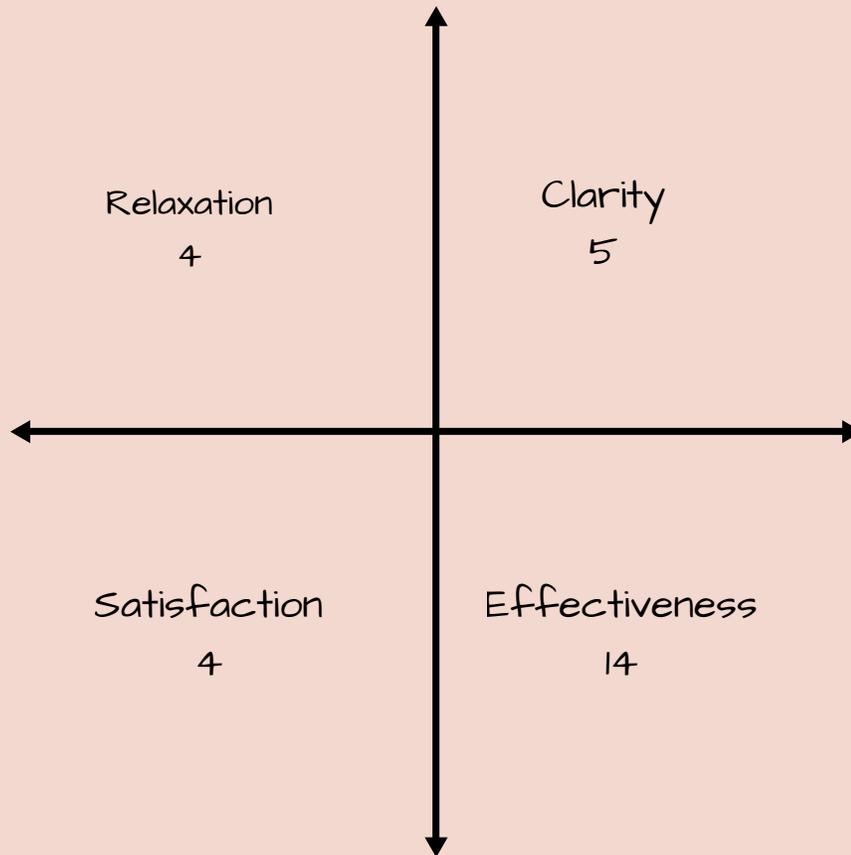
"I feel best when I am on the go, I don't like down time. My head gets busy and I get antsy in my body. I would rather be moving at all times, this is what feels best."

Through our work Daniel started taking micro breaks. At first we started with using the out breath to settle just for 2-3 seconds, and over time he was able to take longer breaks between tasks - and even noticed some new sensations of enjoyment in the midst of idle time.

We used sensory tools to help his body feel contained, safe and at ease when it wasn't moving. Very soon, what used to be trips to the pantry turned into long nights snuggled on the couch with his kids, and then simply going to bed.

Daniel was stunned that his body simply didn't know how to rest or transition from work to relaxation. With the somatic work we did, it started to feel like second nature.

Raquel's Map



Raquel came to me because she felt she could no longer trust her body. "I know what to do, I know what is right and I just simply can't do it."

She told me more about her days, her plans to eat well, to exercise, to stretch, to play the piano...but for some reason her good intentions rarely manifested.

Instead of going out for a walk, she would stay at the computer to help a friend with a messy email. Instead of making herself something delicious to eat after work, she would scroll on her phone instead.

Even though she had all the education and knowledge in the world (she was a school nurse and taught health classes), it was like her legs were made of lead and she could not bring herself to do the right thing.

The more I learned about Raquel in the assessment above, the more we saw that she struggled to express her feelings, wants and needs, in fact, she somewhat took pride in being needless.

This went way back to her young life where she helped raise her siblings and got put in the role of a parent way before she was ready.

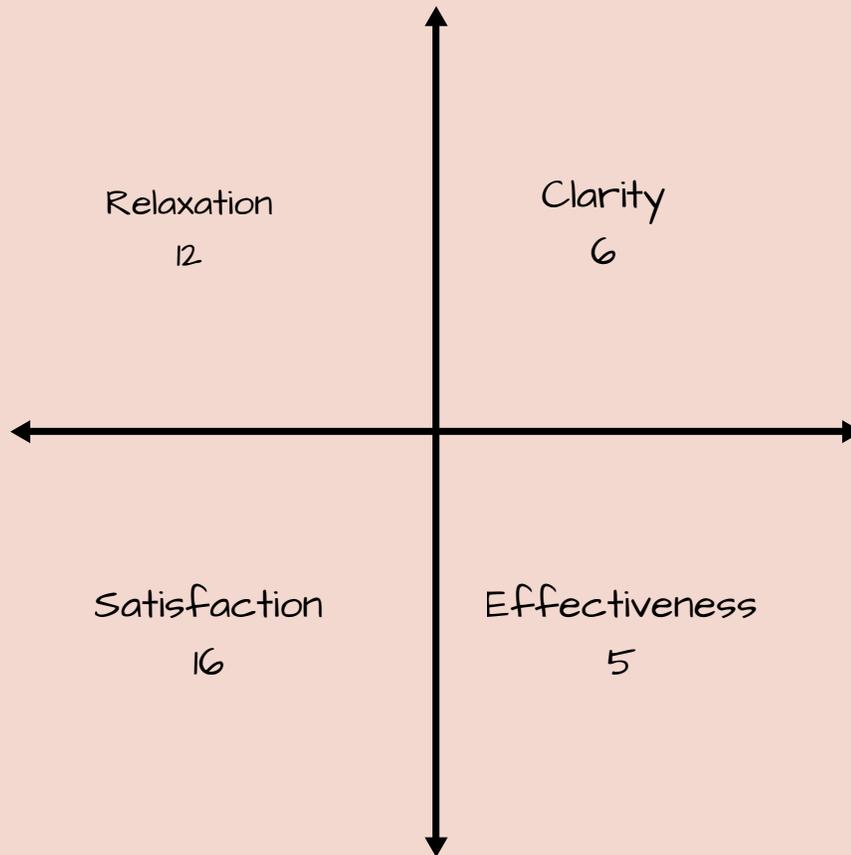
To help her embody her ability to express what she needed, we worked a lot with her personal space and boundaries and her ability to say no. Eventually we started supporting movements that included reaching, but did it in a way that included a lot of fun and play.

For Raquel it was important to see that I was very happy to see her meet her needs, to know and express what she wanted.

Soon after our work together, Raquel engaged in regular dancing lessons - funnily - she found that if she enjoyed what she chose to do, instead of making herself do "what is right", she could easily participate and feel energized and recharged.

Cooking and food preparation and caring for herself gradually started being easier, and today Raquel enjoys her self-care routine and finds new and pleasurable ways to nurture herself.

Jollie's Map



Jollie described herself as “really health conscious”. When we met she was in her mid 40s, and had a history of anorexia nervosa going back to her teens. While she was no longer in active treatment and had restored her weight and renourished herself, she really struggled with being present while eating.

“I cook really delicious and nourishing meals, but then most times I overeat and feel uncomfortably full, or dissociate and discover I have eaten way more than planned. Once the meal is done the only way to not feel heavy is to go out and walk for hours. It is awful. If I don't eat, it's better, but I have to eat, I know better than that.”

Jollie and I were able to determine what was getting in the way of her feeling at ease and satisfied while eating a meal. We had to slow way way down to really describe all the responses: not only what was happening on the body level, but also in her thoughts.

There were too many competing impulses - on one hand her intention to really care for herself, on the other "the voices in her head" that constantly monitored how much and what she was eating. The cacophony of inner messages was too much for her to stay present with, but it wasn't just that.

Because of the years of biochemical and hormonal strain on her body - restriction had also impacted how her body handled food. Her parasympathetic system didn't have an "easy down" setting - after a meal she collapsed, she felt like she was disappearing or that what was in her belly completely took over her sense of self.

It took many sessions of working with the actions of pushing, grasping and pulling - first by herself, so she could feel her own strength and power and ability to control the environment. Then, with support, she was gradually able to allow herself to have and receive something good, in small portions, while someone else was helping her get what she needed.

Today, Jollie is able to enjoy most of her meals and stay present to herself. Her pattern returns a few times a year with extreme personal stress, but she knows how to host the responses with compassion and get back to herself with the help of the practices we have developed together.

Where to go from here?

You've taken the first step on the path to Peace with Food. This is a huge accomplishment in hearing from your body and a real re-commitment to effective and honoring self care.

When self-care is hard, whether in the realm of food, movement, rest, treating yourself with kindness and compassion, it can often feel like a character flaw or an internal malfunction.

Nothing could be farther from the truth! You are actually hearing from a body that is ancient and that often speaks without words – especially when the interruptions in our care were caused by our early environment.

Many of the memories of emotional and somatic overwhelm live in our tissues, and not in our words and explicit autobiographical memory.

The biology can begin to reorganize (and it will) when you add the kind of attunement and care that it has been missing.

My hope for you is that this map starts to point the way to connecting with your body in ways that may not be obvious at first glance, but that speak its language proficiently.

What I know from my work with hundreds and thousands of people who struggle with nourishment is that creating conditions for healing is essential.

Here are the elements that I find most helpful in my work:

1. **Knowing the maps of your body** - like this self-assessment - when you have the maps - you can orient around which steps towards helping yourself will be truly helpful. Yes, mindfulness and awareness are great, but doing something specific and helpful is what we actually long for - systems don't change unless a change is introduced. I use 5 different maps in my work, and they are the first key to the success of my students.
2. **Creating a daily practice** for yourself that helps you connect with your body in ways that support regulation. This is necessary for a period of time until your own biology develops sufficient capacity that these practices are seldom needed. The skills shared in this self assessment and in my book are a part of such daily care.
3. **Having 1-1 support** - a trusted therapist, counselor, coach, spiritual advisor, or a close friend who has walked a similar path and can offer a safe harbor in difficult times. This ensures your system has sufficient relational resources to face challenges - and access to present time solutions which may not have been available to you before.
4. **A caring community** - this can be simply a few people - in real life or online - who are likeminded, who are working on similar challenges as you, and who understand the desires of your heart. True healing is always relational.
5. **A willingness to let the self-healing impulse of your body guide you.** When you use methods that work at the pace of your biology, you can start to feel better in the moment, right away, and moment by moment create a new familiarity with feeling good, at ease, joyful and capable of caring for yourself.

Thank you for taking the assessment
and being curious about how a
somatic approach to emotional eating
can improve and transform your
relationship with food.

If you feel called to transforming your
relationship with food, I will quote my
students:

“ I wish I had done this sooner.”

“Don’t wait!”

**“My whole life has changed, not just
my relationship with food.”**

You can find more about the way I
support people, just like you
at purebelonging.com

The logo for 'pure belonging' features the word 'pure' in a lowercase, orange, rounded font, followed by 'belonging' in a lowercase, grey, rounded font. The text is set against a light purple, circular, watercolor-style background.

DISCOVER YOUR UNIQUE
EMOTIONAL EATING MAP - A
NERVOUS SYSTEM GUIDE TO
UNDERSTANDING YOUR
PATTERNS AND FINDING PEACE
WITH FOOD AND YOUR BODY
FROM WITHIN

by Galina Denzel, SEP, NARM-P
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MS, EDS, LCMHC, LMBT

Acknowledgement: I am deeply grateful to my mentor and teacher Rachel Lewis – founder of Embodied Recovery Institute, for her guidance and support in creating this self assessment.

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