

## Tools for Managing Obesity: The Psychologist Perspective

There are two psychological factors which must be attended to in assisting in the management of obesity. The first is that eating is a natural anxiety and stress reducer and when eating is motivated by a desire for stress and anxiety relief, the individual's eating is disconnected from signals of true hunger and satiety. The second is that a healthy lifestyle that supports obesity management must involve sufficient physical activity and attention to eating habit change that is supported by a system of reward and reinforcement rather than fear and shame.

The provider in a behavioral health role, either a physician or a psychologist, can use relatively simple tools to assist the patient. One project is to establish a reward system for behavioral change that will support an increase in physical activity as appropriate as well as a reward system for changed eating habits. The second project is to assist the patient in developing alternative tools for reducing stress and anxiety and then supporting the patient in self-monitoring to select the non-food alternatives for anxiety and stress reduction.