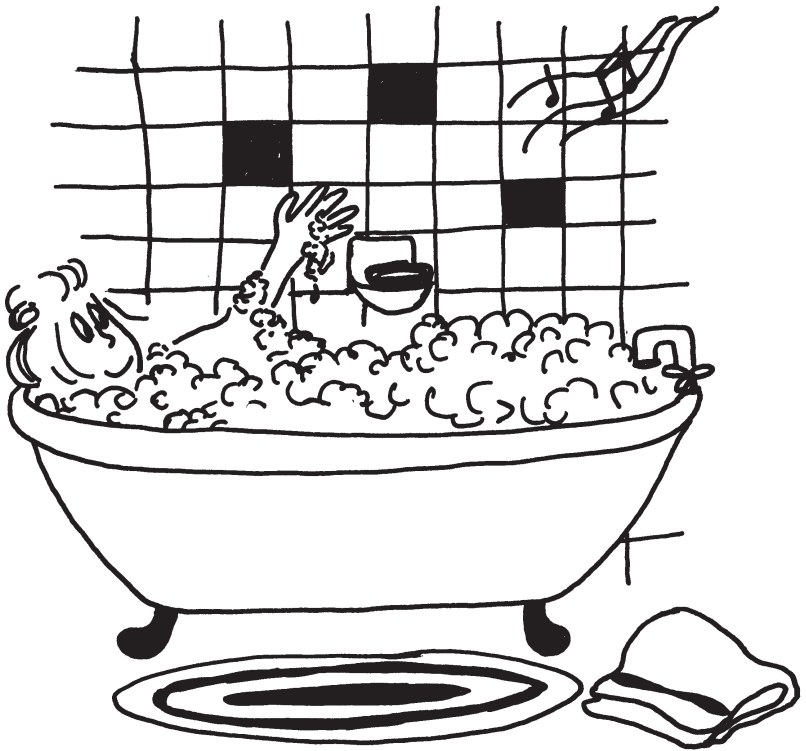


# 12

## Life-style Strategies

*Take time for yourself and  
relax. You are special too!*



### **BUILDING RELAXATION INTO YOUR LIFE**

“I do not have any time for myself. I have a career, family, and husband. Taking care of their needs absorbs all my time. It leaves nothing for me.” This situation is common with today’s working mothers. Although many women work outside the home, to a great degree the responsibility of family and household care may still be theirs. The result is burnout, a deprivation of time for themselves. They become both physically and emotionally drained and have no way to renew their energies. As these women try to be all things to all people at work and at home, their desire for perfection adds to their problems.

For example, Liz has an obsession to provide clean towels for her family. She had instilled the habit of a clean towel for each person every day. After work her evenings were spent doing laundry and folding towels. She was overwhelmed and her resentment grew because she felt deprived of any time for herself. Without this time, she could not restore a sense of balance to her life.

When Liz realized and accepted the effects of her perfectionist attitude she formed new rules for herself and her family. Three towels a week per individual. Did the family miss the towels? Not really. They were delighted with a more flexible and happier Mom, which was the result of modifying her schedule to include a little “free time” to renew her self-esteem.

**Special time for yourself should focus on an activity that you enjoy. What do you really want to do?**

- go for a walk, some quiet time to close your eyes and daydream or take yourself away to a place you would like to be (visualization),
- read a book or newspaper,
- have a snack to take care of your hunger when you come home from work,
- have a bubble bath,
- do a crossword puzzle,
- listen to classical music,
- do stretching exercises, and/or deep breathing.

How can you create time for yourself? There are

demands on your time as soon as you walk in the door. You must plan carefully to reserve some time to attend to your own needs.

Lisa said, "Everybody is hungry when I come home and they want to eat right away so they can get on with their activities." You are worn out trying to attend to everyone. And if you are constantly running on low energy, tired, and irritable, your quality of life and that of your family suffers. Some of the proposed solutions would be to make it known that you need a half hour to yourself when you get home from work. Or perhaps you are a victim of the arsenic hour, that hour before supper when the kids are dogging your footsteps, they're cranky, and they don't stop pestering you. Perhaps they are simply experiencing low blood sugar. They are probably hungry. Putting the meal in front of them immediately seems the easiest solution, but to do that you must forfeit your special time for your own well-being. Does it sound like a dilemma?

Perhaps there is a solution. A handy snack to dampen immediate hunger pangs will allow the children to be in a state of "pleasant hunger" so they will more likely taste and savor their meal. The added bonus is that they will be in a better frame of mind to enjoy supper. This will also eliminate that "Mom, I'm hungry," an hour after supper is over.

The snack could consist of celery sticks with quark cheese, low-fat muffins, fruit, milk, crackers and cheese, toast with peanut butter and jam, or any other of their favorite foods. Snacks can even be prepared after supper for the next day while you are still working in the kitchen. To make this process even simpler, have easy ready-made purchased snacks handy. Try seasoned bread sticks, melba toast, cheese and crackers, yogurt, milk, bread, rolls, or fruit.

As the children get older, they can take responsibility for the snacks themselves. The former years that you prepared the snacks could serve as an example for them to follow. This creates independence and further frees more time for Mom.

While you are resting let the oldest child be in charge for the first half hour and make the others aware that they are to sit quietly and color or watch television. Once a routine is established they will accept it.

Your special time is for you and you alone. In order to avoid noise and distraction you may want to go for a walk to collect your thoughts, regain your composure, and put the sanity back into your life. The real benefit of building a daily relaxation period into your life is that you are not exhausted by the time your holiday time comes around, and vacations can be a pleasure and not a necessity for a person suffering from exhaustion.

Often people go to extremes. They work too hard and play too hard as well. If they dine out they overeat, and tend to eat and drink too much at parties. The balance is gone from life.

By building in a daily "time off" period, you can regain the relaxed composure necessary to enjoy the moment so that you can eat your meal or listen to your children. You can give them your interested attention. You become more focused and a better listener. You also become more efficient because you focus on the situation and enjoy it.

If you don't take the time out to renew your energy you sap your reserves by continuing to overwork your body and mind. You feel overwhelmed most of the time and this causes further energy drain. It's time to take charge and do something positive rather than continue to complain about your situation.

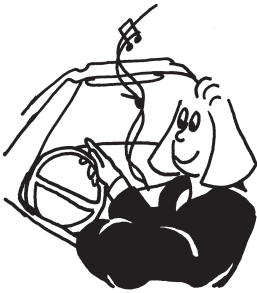
**Don't wait until you are burned out and your body forces you to stop working. Listen to your body so that before burnout you can pull back and recharge to keep your balance of health and vigor.**

Society's demands, pressures of the job, your own high expectations create a high-stress level for you. Your own attitude towards a situation, the necessity of doing everything right the first time, and unrealistic goals and aspirations can aggravate the stress level.

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Of course, you want to strive to be the best that you can be. Your inner strength comes only from acknowledgement of your own self-worth. So be nice to yourself. Don't use failures to whip yourself. Rather use them as stepping stones to something better. You can do this if you retain a balance in life. So do not compromise your relaxation time. If you do it will drain your energy reserves and cause you to be less efficient and productive.

Taking time out allows you to focus more on the event as you are doing it. Do you find you are absent-minded? If you are concentrating on supper when you put your wallet down, you may spend a lot of time looking for it the next time you want it. Why? Because you were living for the future, instead of the present. You were not thinking of where you were putting your wallet when you put it down and so when it comes time to find it, you don't know where it is.



You, not outside events, control how extensively stress affects your life. Stress is your *response* to the situation, not the situation itself. For example, if you get stuck in traffic, an event that is out of your control, you can choose to get annoyed and yell at anyone who beeps his horn. Or you can view the time you're sitting there as the only uninterrupted 15 minutes you'll have all day, a time to reflect, a time to turn on some classical music. It's all a matter of attitude and how you handle the situation.

**Building in time for yourself helps to stop that rushed feeling and allows you to do things more systematically, thinking of what you are doing while you are doing it. It puts you in a more relaxed frame of mind for mealtime. You can enjoy the meal rather than feel "let's get it over with so that I can finally relax."**

The rushed way of thinking involves doing things to extremes, getting everything done, so you can relax. This approach is unhealthy, unbalanced, and self-defeating. By the time you rush in order to relax you're too tired or too edgy to relax. You are living for the future when you will have "time off" rather than enjoying each moment and living it comfortably

at a level that you are able to handle. Living in any other time than the present produces stress. Work on finding ways to let this renewed energy and feeling of being in charge work for you daily, not only on vacations.

Waiting until vacation time to relax can leave you burned out during the year. To prevent this, build in daily mini-relaxation breaks and short weekend getaways for that circuit-breaker when you simply need a little re-energizing. Then your longer vacations will be a pleasure not a necessity. They will get you away from work and home and allow you to relax completely. All of these rechargers can restore the balance in your life.

Allow spontaneity and adventure a place in your life. A last-minute spontaneous weekend getaway that allows you to explore new territory, get some fresh air, and be active can sometimes be an effective pick-up and do you as much good as a month-long holiday. Make the most of what is available to you!

*Observe those around you who have the ability to relax naturally.* Peter relaxes by going downstairs and listening to classical music. After a while he feels regenerated. Interestingly enough, even though he frequently consumes high-fat foods, his cholesterol level is normal. He knows how to “let go” of daily problems. He puts them on hold and his attitude towards life is upbeat and positive.

His wife, Louise, also lives a healthy life-style, eats in a healthy manner, and has become a nonsmoker. However, her preoccupation with eating perfectly and making the right choices along with a difficulty in scheduling time out for herself may be an indicator in determining a higher risk for heart disease. Acquiring a taste for new interests such as learning how to listen to music and appreciate it could help her relax. Or she could build in some other form of activity that she enjoys to regenerate herself and give her more energy.

If you find it difficult to relax, take time to eat, breathe deeply, or have a nap and you find these

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activities unproductive and a waste of time, try to make yourself do them. Introduce them gradually. Taking the time to relax can serve to recharge your battery. Individuals who exhibit the “hurry-up” behavior, called Type A personality, are 7 to 10 times more likely to develop heart disease than are their more relaxed counterparts.

In a study done in England, 200 participants were divided into 2 groups. One hundred participants were the control group and the other 100 were asked to have a half-hour nap sometime during the day. The latter group decreased their risk for heart disease by 30 percent. A little *pause* during the day can go a long way for health. Next time you feel you’d like to lie down for a nap, don’t feel guilty. It may help you to regenerate yourself.

Tim works hard and enjoys his hobby. Taking time out for crossword puzzles and jigsaw puzzles allows him to acquire new concentration skills and extended vocabulary while relieving some of the pressure of everyday life. The relaxed disposition of people like Tim is apparent in their ability to handle stressful situations. So, as you’ve observed and learned from nondieters, try to observe those who have the ability to relax naturally and learn how they do it. These people seem to be able to react positively even in negative situations. You can benefit from them.

You can make eating a positive experience. By learning to focus on eating, you will be celebrating food, and you will derive both psychological and physical satisfaction from the activity. If you’ve been eating in a rushed manner for years, you might ask, “How do I go about tasting my food? How can I take time to spend time eating?”

Wait a minute. Are you feeling that you are not worth the time? Do you ever consider that by focusing on what you are doing while you are doing it you will actually free more quality time for you and your family? Taking time to enjoy your meal and making it a pleasurable dining experience can make your meals “special.”

Tasting and savoring your food allows you to focus on your eating while you are eating and therefore you feel as if you actually ate a meal when you are finished. When you do this it disrupts the automatic eating that leads to taking in more than your body needs or wants. It also prevents constant nibbling throughout the day and evening. You will have more time as your new focus on food will transfer to other activities so that you begin to do all things more systematically. For example, concentrating on where you put your keys when you put them down will allow you to find them again when you want them without wasting time.

**These preparations and skills will help you focus on eating while you are eating.**

- **Adopt a new attitude towards eating. Attitude can be defined as the way you think, feel, and act. For example, if you are dreading eating, or simply eating to consume food and get it over with, you are not deriving physical or psychological benefit from food. You may be focusing on what you will be doing after eating, rather than celebrating the act of eating itself. Enjoy the act of eating your food.**
- **Create a more relaxed atmosphere in which to eat your food. Do this by breaking the constant rush of the day's activities. If you are pressured all day and come home only to hurry to feed yourself and your family, the enjoyment of the meal is gone. Everybody feels tense. Relax when you come home prior to your meal, then actually enjoy the meal together as a family.**

With more rest time, you will be a happier, more energetic mother and wife. This is a bonus to your family. By building in that time-off for yourself, you are allowing yourself to be "special." You will no longer feel controlled by the whims of your family. As you relax, you will give your family more of your time because you want to, not simply because of duty or necessity.

The bonus for you is that you broke the rushing syndrome and created a more relaxed atmosphere to enjoy eating at mealtime. Allowing yourself to have a snack between lunch and supper if you are actually hungry prevents you from coming to the table

famished and eating out of control.

**Focus on your food while you are eating.**

**This means to focus on the event of the moment and savor the moment instead of allowing future events to rob you of the moment itself.**

**By creating a more relaxed atmosphere and celebrating food, it will be easier to focus on the actual meal. In fact, this new way of approaching a meal will allow you to eat more slowly.**

**Color, texture, and aroma can highlight the experience of eating.**

Many things can help you celebrate food. Present the food in an attractive way. Color, texture, and aroma can highlight the experience of eating. Make every meal an event to enjoy, an occasion to anticipate. Special dishes, tablecloths, candles help to create a special atmosphere and need not be restricted only to holidays. Create more special days throughout the year by adding in these trimmings.

### **COMPARING DIETER'S AND NONDIETER'S APPROACH TO MEALS**

#### *The Dieter's Approach*

Not hungry in the morning. Gotta run so you dash out the door with no breakfast. Your system is used to it. The day is busy, packed full of work and decisions to be made. Can't stop for lunch; otherwise you won't be able to complete the work. You work through lunch. You will be having a big supper so you better not overdo it by eating a big lunch. You grab a chocolate bar on the way home for quick energy in order to cope with the excitement at home. You feel edgy and when your kids are hungry, tired, and irritable and make demands on you, you feel drained. Somehow you manage to find the energy to make supper. It's one more job to be done before you can actually relax. You live for 7 o'clock. You rush through supper so that you can get the dishes done and finally relax. You plunk on the couch at 7:30. You turn on the television, feel hungry again since you ate so quickly, and go to the kitchen to fix yourself a snack. Peace at last.

#### *Analyzing the Situation*

Nibbling in the evening can dampen your hunger for breakfast. You could try to eat in such a way that you are hungry at breakfast time. That may mean trying

to forgo your evening snack or to make it smaller. Eating a breakfast, essentially “breaks” the “fast” and gets your system revved up to begin the day.

Since you seem to focus on total time rather than efficient time you have skipped lunch because you were busy. Thinking more clearly about making your time more valuable and more productive through healthy eating and activity can improve your focus and productivity. *It is not the total amount of time that counts, but what you accomplish with the time available.*

Nibbling or not eating through the day to compensate for a larger meal at supper causes your battery to run low all day. This is the diet mentality. The chocolate bar that you eat for a pick up gives you an immediate caffeine and sugar boost. The effects are almost immediate because you consume it on an empty stomach. However, the boost doesn't last long. The caffeine in the cocoa and sugar in the bar result in an immediate quick increase in blood sugar that sends your blood sugar tumbling again due to over-secretion of insulin by the pancreas.

The result is that you are “wiped out” (fatigue, irritability), as you wait for the day to end. You are definitely not equipped to handle the situation at home. You have low energy, little tolerance, and extreme hunger. You may grab anything in sight or end up nibbling as you prepare supper. Since you are focusing on the needs of your family, you deprive yourself of the proper nourishment of mind and body that could restore your balance. You may actually resent the fact that you have to spend the time to prepare a meal and you may resort to convenience foods. High fat and little taste and flavor may cause you to feel that you missed out on the enjoyment of the meal that you were looking forward to all day. Then eat sweets to compensate for your disappointment.

The entire day has been out of balance and this leads to the final let down at the end of the day. You may continue in this manner day after day and miss out on the pleasure of living.

A healthier version of the same scenario puts you in

control of your life by putting the balance back into it.

### *The Nondieter's Approach*

Using a nondieter's approach, this scenario could occur more frequently.

You know that tomorrow will be an extremely busy day. Getting up a few minutes earlier seems impossible so you pack yourself a breakfast the night before. Depending on the time, you may decide to eat it before you leave for work, in the cafeteria at work if you arrive a little early, or at your first coffee break. Even though your day is busy, you make sure you take time for lunch. The pause in your busy schedule plus the lunch helped you to refocus for the decision-making in the afternoon. Because you felt regenerated you accomplished more productive work the rest of the day.

Feeling hungry on your way home, you ate some crackers stored in the glove compartment of your car. This helped dampen the feelings of hunger that you usually experience at this time.

When you arrive home, your kids have eaten the snacks you left for them. You have established a half hour for yourself and the kids do not bother you. You relax and leave behind the rushed feelings you had at work. You are entitled to this.

You remember that your father took time before supper to read the paper or lie down and your mother made sure that you did not bother him for at least a half hour to an hour after he came home from work. The difference then was that your mother was working in the home and helped build this balance into your home life. Now with women working outside the home, they also need this transitional time to unwind; otherwise they will become burned out.

Depending on how you feel, you may choose to have another small snack, go for a walk and reflect on the day's activities, read a magazine, or lie down. You close the book on your work life activities and plan for family activities. You may decide to put supper in

the oven while you relax in your free time. If the children are old enough they can be responsible for supper or your husband can take a turn.



Rather than dreading supper, with this scenario you look forward to it and enjoy the occasion. You value this family time and treasure mealtime to review family activities.

The above scenario allows you to put the balance back in your life. It allows you to be happier and more productive, a bonus to both the employer and the family.

#### REVIEW

- You had a snack to dampen your hunger before supper (that is, if you were hungry between meals).
- You built in some time for yourself to create the proper atmosphere for eating.
- You are learning to focus on your eating while you are eating.

#### PUT RELAXATION INTO YOUR LIFE-STYLE

A rushed life-style leads to rushed eating. Taking a few moments to relax prior to eating can put you in a more relaxed frame of mind to enjoy your meal. If you don't take the time to enjoy and savor your food, it can cause automatic "nibbling" later on because you will still be looking for satisfaction from food.

- Use the breathing technique (see p245) if you feel anxious or as a way of building in the pause to relax.
- Sit down for a few minutes prior to preparing supper to read the paper, daydream, have a snack, go over the day's activities, go for a short walk (while supper is cooking).
- Leaving relaxation time only until the end of the day is the all-or-nothing thinking of dieters comparable to having a reward, probably food, at the end of the day. Building in relaxation more regularly in the form of short breaks, for example, will allow you to focus on your work and be more productive.

Pamper yourself. You're worth it and you'll feel better for it.

#### EATING AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS

Jean had a good business meeting and accomplished many things. She felt wonderful and on her way

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home stopped at the convenience store to pick up a bag of chips. As she turned off the ignition, she realized that she usually rewarded herself with food whenever she felt she had accomplished something. She confronted the situation and realized that the accomplishment itself was the reward. It was an internal reward.

Many people reward themselves with food when they feel either happy or sad and rob themselves of the experience of the emotion itself. It's normal to feel depressed when something goes wrong. Many people try to see the positive in the situation by allowing themselves to feel the emotion and work it through. Talking to others about it helps you to see the situation in a more objective framework.

Building in relaxation time for yourself can help you to focus on becoming more aware of activities that may be associated with eating. A quick form of relaxation is deep breathing. It is a skill that if practised when you are not stressed, can do wonders for you in stressful situations. Take a few minutes daily to practise it. It will help you to build the *pause* into situations naturally as you master the skill.

### **MAKING THE MOST OF DEEP BREATHING**

The following technique is a skill that will help you to relax. It is very effective if you practise it regularly so that you are prepared to use the skill when you are under stress. It can help you when you feel anxious which may cause you to want something sweet to eat or smoke a cigarette to calm you.

Deep breathing is also a way of taking time for yourself. Don't feel guilty when you take time to practise this technique. The little time you are taking will help you to put the "pause" into your life-style and help you to refocus and re-energize.

In order to get the most out of the technique, it is essential to understand the purpose of the inhalation and exhalation phase.

### INHALATION PHASE

It is invigorating, tension-producing  
— used somewhat like a yawn,  
— used when ready to terminate an exercise: a deep breath or 2 will create tension and help bring you back to your normal level of alertness,  
— important in reversing the relaxed state and is used to come out of the relaxed state,  
— usually combined with the flexing and stretching of muscles (i.e. as if you are awakening from a state of sleep).

### EXHALATION PHASE

It is relaxing  
— promotes a feeling of sinking down, slowing down, and heaviness to a feeling of complete relaxation.

#### *Technique*

- Breathe normally and observe the natural breathing cycle.
- Inhale slowly and steadily through the nose, expanding your abdominal area rather than the rib cage. (Many people do this incorrectly by sucking in their stomachs when they breathe in). When you permit your body to inhale by itself without any conscious thought on your part, you will do it naturally and correctly.
- Focus your attention on the exhalation phase of the breathing cycle. Concentrate on it and think about it, exhaling slowly, and allowing the abdominal area to contract naturally. It is during this phase that you feel and experience the sensations described under “Exhalation phase” that will result in an overall state of relaxation.
- The key to this exercise is to feel the sensations as you exhale, and only on the exhalations.

*Practising this technique will allow you with time to relax quickly at a moment’s notice.*

Sometimes associations can trigger a desire to eat. You may not be actually hungry but feel compelled to eat anyway. You may be eating and not be conscious that you are doing it. For example, you may be watching television and eat peanuts or chips compulsively, not even remembering tasting one. This is another form of automatic eating.

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*If you are not tasting the food, then it becomes wasted calories.*

This form of eating is more a habit than a need or desire. You somehow associate television with eating. However, some of these associations may be so ingrained that you do not recognize what is happening. Ten pounds later your slacks no longer fit.

Earlier I spoke about eating as a temporary relief from stress, and I tried to deal with the reasons behind the eating using positive techniques to overcome the negative situation.

Some activities associated with eating are also automatic. These are triggers that lead to eating and the focus is on the activities rather than on the food.

Here is a list of possible activities:

- watching television
- reading a book, magazine, or newspaper
- social occasions where everyone else is eating
- associating certain individuals with certain foods
- using food as a comforter when you are feeling low to restore warm feelings.

As society moves from the industrial age to the information age, keeping abreast of news and recent happenings in your field becomes a greater priority. Reading the newspaper or watching television while eating may be timesaving to accomplish two things at once. Are you really enjoying either event to its fullest?

The other scenario may be that you are beat after work and have only enough energy to watch television. You sit in front of television in the evenings hoping to unwind. You may come home from work too tired to make supper and you use convenience foods to prepare a quick meal. However, your poor eating habits give you less energy. The high-fat content of convenience foods may weigh you down and make you more sluggish. Plus there is very little psychological satisfaction from this food. You feel too tired to move, so there is no energy or time to do any physical activity.

Time or lack of it seems to be used as an excuse for being sedentary. You may not even perceive activity to be important enough to make an effort. Yet the extra energy that you can retrieve from regular activity can give you more time by improving your efficiency during the day and evening. It is not the number of hours worked but the amount accomplished that counts. You can look busy without accomplishing very much. Productivity is what really matters.

What is the common factor in these two situations? In both instances, attention is on the television set, not the food. Over time these television/ food associations become so strong that they may seem impossible to break. However, your new way of thinking will find these sedentary activities less enjoyable.

Bob's situation is an example. Bob came home from work feeling tired and he wanted to watch the news. The family sat down to supper and were not able to say a word because Bob was watching the news. Bob gulped down his food keeping time with the momentum of the news. He often didn't even know what he was eating. He ate because the food was placed in front of him and it was mealtime. Was he hungry? Or was he tuning into the clock as an external cue for time to eat? He seemed not to be paying attention to his internal clock of hunger to regulate the amount of food he ate.



After supper, Bob's wife did the dishes. Bob changed and sometimes helped her dry the dishes. When finished, he would turn on the television again to watch his series of evening programs. As soon as he turned on the television he was hungry again. The association was there between watching television and eating.

Bob had just finished supper. How could he be hungry again? The answer is that he wasn't. Bob never focused on his food while he was eating. He was not tasting and savoring his food. He didn't even remember eating or what he ate.

Perhaps you could exchange the television for the table as a trigger to eat. Try to eat in one place at the table and eat only when you are in that spot. This can help to narrow down one area of the table for eating. Do not play cards or do bookwork or any other activity in that spot. Otherwise, it may trigger you to eat and you will end up building in a new association.

Saving one spot at the table only for eating may be difficult to do and may not be necessary to continue. However, for a few weeks it may help you to discover what triggers you to eat. An awareness that there is an association and that you are wasting the calories if you are not tasting and savoring the food, may be all that is necessary to break the habit. After all, you are not depriving yourself when you choose not to eat simply because it is habit. This differs from denying yourself the food when you want it.

For those people living alone, television may provide company. Some people find that by placing a tray in front of the television set while eating, the tray becomes the signal to eat. When finished eating, the tray is removed, and the desire is gone. If you use a tray in front of the television set, be conscious of the fact that you are actually tasting your food and savor it slowly. Do not pick up the momentum of the television program, causing you to eat quickly.

The craving to eat that occurs while you are watching television may come about simply because you need to do something with your hands. If so, try working on a puzzle, do some knitting, or realize that it is all right to do nothing with your hands.

**The above situations may cause you to change your behavior towards food by disassociating it with other activities. However, behavior change is an external change and may not be natural. A keen awareness of the things that trigger you to eat, and an understanding of the fact that you are not really concentrating on the food enough to eat at a certain time will help to change your attitude towards these activity/food associations. This internal change in the way that you view these associations can help you to change the way you act towards the food and the activity.**

While discussing this in class, Elliot felt that people should have 2 places to eat, one at the table for the meal and another place specifically for snacks. He discovered that by associating a specific chair with snacks he had to take the trouble to ask the family if he could sit in the specific chair before he could eat.

The process of deciding whether he really wanted to ask them to move out of the specific chair, put a *pause* into his automatic eating. In many instances he decided that he really wasn't hungry and did not want the food after all. Just as confrontation allows you to put the *pause* into eating for the sake of eating or for other reasons by asking yourself if you are really hungry, confining your eating to only a few places allows you to do the same. It makes you more conscious of whether you are really hungry and allows you to decide if it is psychological or physical hunger. As you begin to develop these skills you eat less because you choose to. It is your decision and you have discovered it so it empowers you to act in a positive way.

When my mother visited from Montreal, she used to come loaded down with all sorts of goodies for our freezer. The association of Mom and home-baked treats came from my growing up in a European home. Cakes and cookies were plentiful in our home. It was my Mom's way of saying "I love you." This association was so strong that whenever I went back to Montreal or my parents came to Manitoba, I ate too much and I seemed to lose control.

I tried to analyze the situation. Did this occur because I hadn't had these foods for a while and felt deprived? Or was it simply because these foods conjured up nice warm protective feelings of home and Mom? Or was it the association of seeing Mom that made me feel I had to eat these sweets? It probably was a combination of all of these.

Today I am more aware that much of this eating was automatic. I wanted the food, but not the huge quantities I was eating. Tasting and savoring the food and focusing on the food while eating allowed me to

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be satisfied with less. I got my satisfaction from the first and last few bites.

Because of my life-style change, some of the foods Mom brings are too sweet or too rich for me now. So I am satisfied with a taste. My Mom and I had a discussion about this. I love her for herself, not because she bakes these goodies. She may still bring some cakes and cookies when she visits, but now they stay in the freezer longer and are not all devoured at once. The balance is there. I don't use them as comfort foods. My walks provide me with all the serenity I need to provide comfort and help me to pace myself better.

The act of eating can cause the release of endorphins which acts as a pain reliever and tranquilizer to give you a good feeling. However, the feeling may be only temporary because guilt feelings may occur later about eating the food. Laughter and exercise can also release endorphins that leave you with a good feeling. So go out there and enjoy yourself, and find the fun in physical activity as well.

Some people depend on food more than others do. Cathy could coax Billy to go to Uncle Joe's only by telling him there was food there. Yet his brother Christopher was so excited to go because of Uncle Joe's jokes and the fact that Uncle Joe played ball with him. Christopher was more active and slimmer than Billy who often stayed home with Mom and liked to eat. Because Billy was not as active, food became his source of entertainment. As he grew, so did his waist size. *Does food have to be the center of attention in order for you to have fun?*

Every time Jean went to get gas at a specific gas station, she craved a chocolate bar. A few months ago, she bought her favorite brand when she went to pay for the gas. She continued this a few more times. Had an association built up? What could she do?

She could change gas stations. The other option would be to recognize the association and to confront it to see if she really wanted the chocolate bar. If she is usually hungry at this time, maybe she could have a snack at afternoon coffee break. She discovered that

the chocolate bar didn't get tasted; rather it was gulped down quickly. The immediate rise in blood sugar followed by low blood sugar actually caused her to crave more.

Sherry ate a large meal but still wanted dessert. Was this because of psychological hunger or the fact that desserts trigger the end of the meal? If Sherry had been dieting recently, wanting dessert was a natural response to past feelings of deprivation. Try to get away from the diet mentality when you are ordering food in a restaurant. Do you order salad because you believe it is lower in calories and will compensate for the calories in the dessert?

Will salad and dessert hold you over? Depending on the type of salad, it may be high in fat (salad dressing) and contain very little substance in the form of carbohydrate or protein. Check how you feel a few hours later. If dessert triggers the end of the meal, try to find a more suitable replacement. Or is a replacement really necessary as your attitude changes about how to end the meal?

Where it is required, tea with milk serves as a warm ending to the meal. Eat the dessert if you really want it, but if it is simply habit, perhaps you could skip dessert until later and be satisfied with tea. By giving yourself the option to have it later, you are getting rid of the sense of deprivation if you choose not to have it. When you do have the dessert, eat it without guilt. In this way, you will derive more satisfaction from it which will allow you to taste and savor the food better.

By including variety and spontaneity in your day, your life will become less humdrum and excitement will take its place. Sometimes you may choose to have dessert to signify the end of the meal and sometimes you may choose to have nothing. There is no set rule or perfect way of eating; go with the flow.

### **EATING OUT HUGS™ STYLE**

Approximately one-third of Canadian meals are eaten out and this rate is expected to go up to two-thirds by the turn of the century. Obviously, this is a preferred life-style choice for many people. An added

benefit to eating out is the opportunity to experiment with different flavors and textures. The excitement of making new discoveries can add zip and variety to mealtime.

Perhaps you can try a recipe at home. Be inquisitive. Ask the waiter what herb is in that white sauce to bring out the flavor and use your new findings to experiment with your own meal.

Many people binge when eating out. Marilyn used to be very strict with her diet during the week, and looked forward to the weekends when she allowed herself to go off the diet and eat out. Her ritual would be to have no breakfast and maybe no lunch to compensate for the extra calories she consumed at supper. This diet mentality caused her to be overly hungry by supper. She felt starved and therefore overate. She rationalized that it was socially acceptable to binge when eating out.

This starve/binge cycle led to a drop in her metabolic rate. This was her body's way of saying that when she finally did eat, it would "squirrel away" a little more fat just in case she did something silly again, such as not eating until supper. Marilyn realized that when she went to a restaurant starved, she actually was not even tasting her food. Marilyn's strategy changed. She ate regularly and went to the restaurant meal pleasantly hungry and enjoyed the food.

Many people eat one way at home and differently when visitors come or when they are at a restaurant. If you choose high-fat foods on these occasions it's no wonder you can't seem to stabilize your weight. There's nothing wrong with eating some foods higher in fat content. But switching back and forth between high-fat and low-fat content foods impedes your progress in changing your food preferences.

It's better to discover some low-fat entrées in restaurants that are both physically and psychologically satisfying. As you begin to cook low-fat versions of your meals in a tasty way, your company will love the food. Don't feel that you have to bring out the high-fat meals when visitors show up.

With the HUGS™ philosophy, you can go to any social occasion and be in charge. So keep the HUGS™ principles in mind when you eat out.

**1–*Eat regularly*** Eat regular meals during the day. Don't starve at breakfast and lunch to compensate for eating out at supper. This will allow you to feel more energetic throughout the day rather than feeling dragged out, waiting for that huge meal to devour at suppertime. You will arrive at the meal pleasantly hungry instead of famished. Being overly hungry leads to quick eating due to the insatiable hunger that you have built up. A pleasant hunger results in enjoying the meal thoroughly, allowing you to feel in charge.

**2–*Order what you really want*** One day, when I was in a restaurant for a meeting around 10:30 a.m., I wanted to eat something. I noticed the cinnamon bread and asked to have it toasted. Forgetting that toasting bread usually means loading it with butter, the result was soggy toast with little texture or cinnamon taste. The lesson learned was to be assertive. If unsure how a food is prepared, ask.

If you order what you really want in a restaurant, you feel satisfied. But first you have to tune into what you really desire. Rose went into the restaurant with her friend and wanted spaghetti and meatballs, which she ordered. She felt satisfied with the meal and it had sustaining power since she satisfied herself both physically and psychologically. By contrast, her friend did not know what she wanted and finally ended up ordering a sandwich. According to HUGS™, this in itself should have been physically satisfying, yet she wanted more. She had not satisfied the psychological part of her hunger and she craved something more.

You can have what you want in a restaurant so be assertive. One evening Mitchell and I went to a concert and arrived early. We wanted something to drink and went into the cafeteria. We took a juice, a glass of water, and another empty glass. At our seat, we added water to the juice to suit our tastes.

YOU COUNT,  
CALORIES  
DON'T

Here is another example. Allison was at the lake on the weekend and prepared a tasty supper. She ate until she was satisfied and wanted to finish with something chocolate. She and her family decided to go out for a snack. On the dessert menu was ice cream, chocolate brownies, and apple pie. Chocolate brownies were what Allison wanted and she and her friend Grace ordered them. The rest of the family ordered what they desired.

A few minutes later the waitress came back to say there were no more chocolate brownies. Allison settled for apple pie with ice cream and Grace, after some hesitation, ordered apple pie. But that is not what they really wanted, so why did they order it? Why settle for something that you don't want because you feel you must order something? While they were eating the apple pie, they were still thinking about the chocolate brownies and were still not satisfied so in fact, they wasted those calories.



**When ordering,  
learn to be  
assertive, to  
have what you  
really want.**

The next day, Grace, who had an even stronger built-up desire for chocolate ate several pieces of dark chocolate. Finally she was satisfied. The lesson learned was that refusing the apple pie would probably have yielded the same outcome. She could have bought a chocolate bar at a convenience store instead of having the pie. Decide what you really want and go for it.

**Don't settle for less.**

**Check if the special of the day is what you really want;  
if not, why order it simply because it is on special.**

If the meal is not enjoyable, you will crave dessert to satisfy that unfulfilled need. For example, the sandwich and fries may be the special of the day. If you do not care for fries, order a salad instead, or order à la carte, perhaps soup and a sandwich.

Try this technique. Say to the waitress, "I know that the special comes with fries and I would prefer to have the soup so could you arrange this?"

The words have special meaning.

“I know,” indicates that you understand the situation.

“And,” states how you feel about the situation.

“So,” is your request for their action.

You can use this form of confrontation anytime you are in a situation where you need to be direct in a polite manner. If nothing on the menu particularly suits your taste, why not order à la carte. An example of this would be breakfast of a scrambled egg with dry toast (whole wheat), orange juice, and water. Use the water to dilute the juice as regular juice is usually strong and too sweet. A substitute for the protein, in this case the egg, would be peanut butter and jam with the toast.

**3–Use nondiet thinking** “I’d better get my fill of the cheesecake now because when I go back on my diet tomorrow I won’t be having cheesecake for a while.”

“I feel full but I still have room for a big piece of pie. Afterwards, I’ll go lie down.”

This diet thinking can be replaced by a more positive attitude.

“I’ll take a small piece of that cheesecake. It looks good and I wonder what it tastes like. If I don’t try it, I’ll be wondering what it tastes like and may end up feeling deprived. That will lead me to binge on whatever is in sight when I get home.”

“I can always have more food later because I feel full now. I can ask the hostess if I can take a piece of pie home for another day when I will appreciate it more. That way I am not denying myself and I am not stuffing myself either.”

**When refusing food it’s easier to say “I’m on a diet” because society accepts this reason for denying yourself something you want. If you say you don’t want it, it appears to be rude to the hostess. Try saying “I’m not hungry right now, maybe later.” Later may or may not come.**

Even slim people are often in the diet mentality. Observe different people at a social occasion. Non-dieters, those that are not starving and binging to remain slim, are more selective in their choices. They

may eat what they want and may eat a little more than usual, but their regular eating habits prevent them from intentionally bingeing or overeating.

It is easier to resist food if you are feeling satisfied and realize that this is not the last time that you will see lemon pie for a while. After all, you can buy a pie or make one anytime or you can ask to take some home. Slightly undereating at mealtime to leave room for dessert may be done on special occasions if it is not carried to the extreme.

Eating very little at mealtime so that you can try all the desserts reverts to the diet mentality. "I'd better eat all I can now because it may not be there later on." In a society of plenty, running out of food is not a problem. Nondieters know this and are more selective in choosing the meal. They will eat desserts only when they truly desire them.

#### ***4—Striving for a balance of carbohydrate and protein***

Choose a balance of carbohydrates and protein in your food because you want to, not because you feel you should. You may not always feel like choosing the right balance to give yourself the maximum energy, but striving for this balance and its sustained energy value will result in a satisfying dining-out experience.

Eating in this manner will help you to focus your energy on the mealtime event rather than just the food. The company and entertainment are also part of the evening. Food is no longer the center of attention for you. You will be able to taste and savor your food and have enough energy reserve to enjoy the rest of the evening. Overeating makes us feel uncomfortable. You don't feel like being sociable and all you want to do is go home and go to bed.

Here are some examples of different restaurants and the kinds of choices that indicate the principle of balance.

**ITALIAN** Pasta dishes are great but the "in thing" these days is pasta with various cream sauces. These are richer than the traditional tomato sauces and have a higher fat content. The protein content may be

minimal. A more balanced option that is lower in fat content is the traditional spaghetti with meat sauce or meatballs. You may choose to ask for a tossed salad instead of garlic bread.

Some restaurants skim on the protein source and give you a hefty portion of noodles topping it off with garlic bread. It is cheaper for the restaurant and customers are usually satisfied since carbohydrates fill you up quickly. However, the insufficient protein content may necessitate a snack later on. Otherwise, insatiable hunger will strike, making you raid the refrigerator. Decide what you really want. Some cream sauces with sufficient protein content are not too heavy and could be your choice.

**FRENCH** French cuisine usually involves a variety of sauces to add flavor to the meat portion of the meal. Try meals cooked in wine sauce rather than in a cream sauce. These meals are tasty and nicely flavored with herbs. A food doesn't have to be rich to be tasty. For lunch, quiche and salad may be loaded with fat, so take control and minimize the fat by asking for the salad dressing on the side.

**CHINESE** The more traditional combination plates consist of an assortment of deep-fried foods (chicken balls, shrimp, etc.) and sweet and sour sauces (spare ribs). You eat a high-fat content as well as sugar and little meat. There are excellent stir-fried dishes that you can order instead. Examples are beef and broccoli, curried chicken, and a variety of other combinations. Ordering one of these with stir-fried chinese vegetables and the usual rice that comes with the meal presents a colorful and tasty balance. In many cases, you may want to ask for more rice. If you are going with someone else and you choose 2 different entrées plus the rice and vegetables, you can still have some variety to the meal. Acquiring a taste for less fattening foods means that you eventually prefer the latter choice to the higher fat foods.

Ask the waitress when you are unsure if the dish is deep-fried or stir-fried. In one instance, my husband and I ordered a couple of dishes and to our surprise, the chicken dish (lemon chicken) came to us in a

deep-fried batter version. We both tried it and didn't care for it. Mitchell picked off the thick batter and ate the little piece of chicken inside. The batter was too greasy for his taste. He shared the rest of my dish and the rice and vegetables and asked the waitress to wrap the rest up for our dog. Our dog is extremely active and lives by the HUGS™ philosophy so she could handle the higher fat meal.

**GREEK** A variety of kabob dishes (chicken, beef, lamb) served with rice and vegetables offers a nice balance for a meal, lunch or evening.

**SALAD BARS** These are often the dieter's choice. Salads certainly fill you up quickly because of the high water content of vegetables, yet salads do not provide the balance you are looking for. Most important of all, is it really what you want to eat or are you eating it simply because you feel it is lower in calories?

Lettuce is relatively low in fiber content but many of the vegetables have a higher fiber content. You get water, vitamins, and minerals but little else. Besides, because of the mayonnaise and cream-based mixtures in salad dishes as well as the dressing itself, the total fat content of a salad can be quite high.

The salad bar choice for a meal can be misleading. Some estimates suggest that selections from a salad bar result in total caloric intake from 250 to 1000 with 60 to 70 percent of these calories coming from fat. It seems to be a healthy selection, but it can lack substance, leading to a binge later because of feelings of deprivation. Bread could accompany this meal to boost the carbohydrate content. Pasta salads may add carbohydrates but may also add to the total fat content.

Eating salad so that you can have dessert is deceiving. In the first place, you may not have saved any calories and certainly not fat content. Furthermore, this thinking puts you right back into the diet mentality. "I'm having less at lunch so I can have the chocolate mousse." When you make these kinds of choices, you still end up with very little "holding-

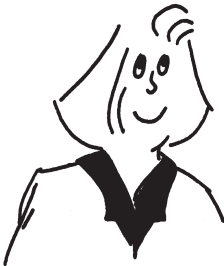
over power” in your meal and this can lead to a binge later on. This may occur because of your lower blood sugar level a few hours later. You are not any farther ahead in this situation.

**FAST FOODS AND PIZZAS** Ordering a hamburger on an unbuttered bun with a salad can be a nice combination. Try to frequent the restaurants that broil or barbecue rather than fry their hamburgers.

Pizzas can give you carbohydrates from the crust and protein from the cheese and toppings. Go with the thicker crust to increase the carbohydrate content of the meal. Vegetables are often part of the topping. Adding a salad can round out the meal nicely. Some restaurants use the higher fat cheese which you can notice by the greasy sheen on the pizza not to mention the greasy feel that it leaves in your mouth. Try different pizza places and food combinations to find the ones that are right for you.

***5-Eating until satisfied—the “doggy bag” option***

When eating out you have the option to ask for a doggy bag if you cannot finish your meal. The leftover food may be a treat for lunch the next day. You may also choose to leave what you cannot eat on your plate if you are feeling satisfied and pleasantly full. If supper time is planned to be later, and you know you will be hungry, schedule a snack for yourself. Stuffing yourself on bread while waiting for your dinner and then forcing the whole dinner down because you paid for it is not truly enjoying the meal.



The snack you ate prior to the restaurant meal and a little bread at the restaurant will allow you to create the right atmosphere of relaxation so that you are able to eat the meal slowly and fully enjoy it. If you fill up on bread, then you may not have enough room for the meal itself which is really what you are paying for.

Enjoy, taste, and savor the meal. Dine, don't simply eat. If you anticipate that the meal will be too much food, you may make some arrangements with your partner beforehand. In my case, my husband can eat more than I can, so I ask him to eat very little bread

beforehand so that I can give him some of my meat portion (the expensive part of the meal). Otherwise, we ask for a “doggy bag” and take it home for the next day or feed it to our dog. A meal for 2 ends up being a meal for 3.

Some restaurants serve smaller, more reasonably sized portions that most people can eat. Tasty options in some restaurants involve an item with a heart beside it that indicates it meets the Heart Foundation’s criteria and is lower in fat. This allows you to experience these lower fat versions firsthand before attempting to make them yourself. Here are some other suggestions that will help to make the restaurant meal what you want it to be.

- Ask for the salad dressing on the side. The house dressing usually contains a nice blend of herbs and may be lower in fat (vinaigrette-based rather than cream-based). If the house dressing is thicker, try dipping salad into dressing. You will end up using less.
- Ask for gravy to be served on the side or ask for a small amount of gravy. If your plate is served with too much gravy you can always scrape off what you do not want.
- Ask for butter or sour cream on the side. This allows you to be in control of the quantity that you want. Some potatoes taste so good by themselves that they hardly need any addition of fat to mask or hide the flavor. It’s the same for hamburger that is ordered with so many condiments that you do not even taste the hamburger. Or the cob of corn that is seasoned and loaded with butter and salt. Are you really tasting the corn? You might as well take a bit of butter on the edge of your knife and eat it straight up. The idea of the fat is to enhance not mask the flavor of the food. Decide what you really want using condiments such as butter, salt, sauces, and gravies tastefully.
- Share your dessert. This will satisfy your curiosity about how it tastes without overstuffing yourself. Be selective and order only what you really want. Substitutions in restaurants are often possible, as long as it isn’t the rush hour.

*6-Tune into what it feels like to overeat* So you overate. Experience and remember this uncomfortable, heavy feeling and decide whether you like this feeling. Is it allowing you to enjoy the occasion or are you too tired to care? A big meal takes a lot of energy to digest, so the scenario of eating and lying down on the couch is a common one. Not wanting to repeat this feeling can lead to more instances where you will enjoy the food as well as the event but eat for the enjoyment of it. Eating past the point of satisfaction is often no longer enjoyable.



#### HOW TO ELIMINATE SWINGING ON THE FRIDGE DOOR

- Eat regularly, every 3 to 6 hours when physically hungry.  
*Purpose* Keeps blood sugar from going too low, that could result in insatiable hunger, and frees you from cycles of starvation and binging.
- Eat “balanced” meals that include carbohydrate and protein at all meals.  
*Purpose* Stabilizes blood sugar, sustains energy, keeps your body in the “drive” mode.
- Be in charge of food and situations. Use skills of confrontation and distraction, techniques to combat “automatic eating.”  
*Purpose* Empowers you, freeing you from the obsession of food, recognizing that much of your eating is emotional.
- Understand how food affects your body. This allows you to postpone eating certain high-sugar foods on an empty stomach.  
*Purpose* Prevents your blood sugar from going up quickly, leading to a drop in blood sugar that will make you lose control. Eating a snack if hungry and adding in those “extras” when your body is better equipped to handle it, puts you back in the driver’s seat.
- Eat only until satisfied. Learn to tune into feelings of hunger and feelings of fullness. Allow yourself to be more relaxed with eating. Not feeling guilty allows you to extract more enjoyment from eating. It’s permissible to leave something on your plate if you are full.  
*Purpose* Satisfies your needs by allowing you to eat what you want and at the same time providing you with the skills to realize when your

body is saying “Stop. I’ll have more later if I really want it.”

- Put in the “pause” prior to eating.

- 1) By using confrontation and asking yourself if you are really hungry;
- 2) By stopping half-way through a meal to consciously reassess if you want more;

- 3) By focusing on eating while you are eating, and confining your eating to a minimum number of places so you will think before grabbing something to eat;

- 4) By eating in a relaxed manner, tasting and savoring your food.

*Purpose* Helps you find different ways of being more conscious of what you are eating, rather than resorting to “I see it, I want it” or “Everyone else is eating, so I’ll join the crowd.” You realize that you can participate in the fun and enjoyment without mimicking their every action.

Go with the flow. Gain confidence in your ability. Most of all enjoy the process of discovering or rediscovering yourself.

