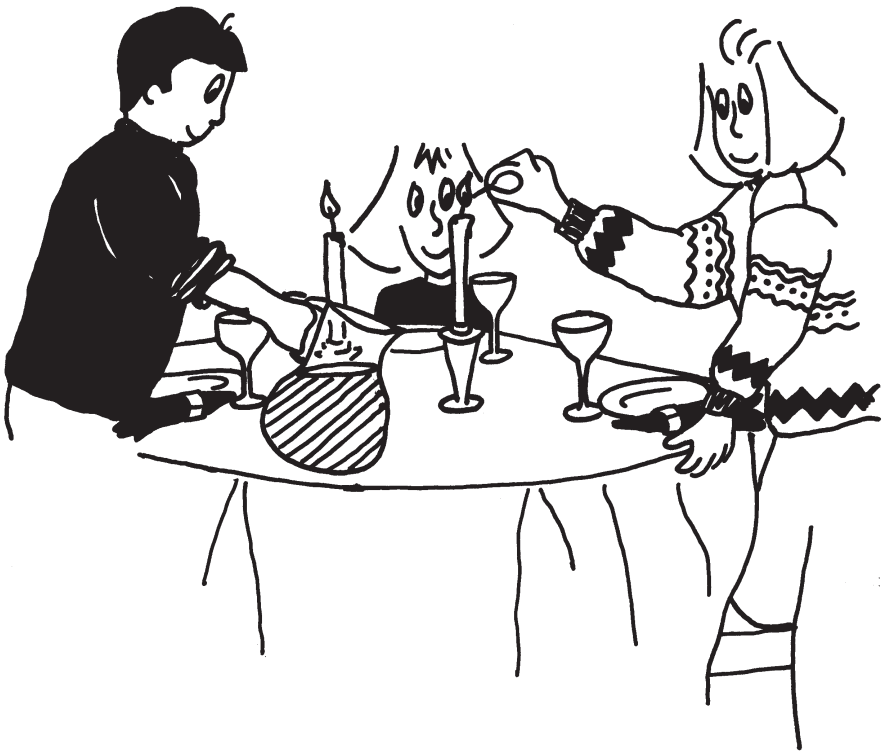


9

Maximum Satisfaction from Food

Use skills of confrontation to cope with bursts of psychological hunger. Stop: taste, savor, and enjoy your food to the fullest.



YOU COUNT,
CALORIES
DON'T

If you are eating only to feed your psychological hunger, then these calories are wasted. Take the time to taste and savor your food and you'll notice that you will be actually satisfied with less. Why? Because you took the time to satisfy your psychological hunger from the food.

FOCUS ON FOOD—PAYING ATTENTION

When you don't pay attention to what you are eating, you literally cheat yourself from getting satisfaction and pleasure from the food. Then, in searching for the sense of well-being that you denied yourself, you eat more than you need or want. Perhaps the tendency to avoid paying full attention when you are eating comes from the belief that you don't deserve to be good to yourself. If you actually sit down and enjoy your food, you have to acknowledge that you're giving something to yourself. This is very difficult for many people to do—especially women. Also, many people pride themselves on being able to do many things at a time. They say, "I work all the time; in fact, I don't even take time out for lunch." They think it's efficient to eat while they are doing 10 other things, rather than wasting time on eating without doing anything else. *Do these people really taste their food or are they eating it only because it's there?*



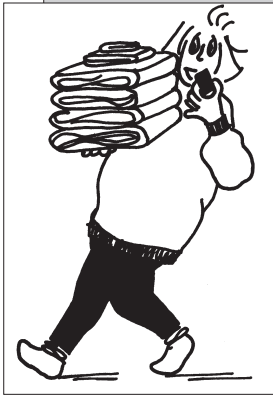
Experience the different taste sensations, textures, and aromas. The outcome of not tasting your food can be

- eating more food to satisfy your cravings,
- overeating due to unconscious eating and being out of tune with your body, or
- nibbling throughout the evening because you don't remember eating anything.

Any bite of food that goes into your mouth deserves attention. When you eat, do nothing but eat. Even if you're eating only a handful of raisins, sit down, take a deep breath, relax, and focus on the raisins. If you are doing anything else while you are eating, you are not concentrating on the subtleties of the tastes and flavors of the food. In this way, you not only deprive yourself of the enjoyment of the food, but you may form an association between eating and some other activity (see Chapter 12).

When you are eating by yourself it is easy to pay attention only to your food. When you are with another person it is more difficult to concentrate only on your food. Here's a tip. When eating with others, spend about 30 seconds focused on your food, then put your fork down and focus your attention on the other person and the conversation. You cheat the person you're with if you eat while conversing, and you deprive yourself of the pleasure of the food if you talk while eating. So alternate eating and talking. This will allow you to receive optimum pleasure from the food and your relationships.

OTHER FRAMES OF MIND THAT CAN LEAD TO ABSENT-MINDED EATING.



THE JUGGLER You're a person who always juggles 20 things at a time, and one of the 20 is eating. Have you finished all the kids' lunch leftovers during the half hour you spent putting away the laundry and listening to your neighbor on the telephone?

These people often feel that taking time out to eat is not productive. Yet focusing on eating allows you to put the "pause" into your day and gives your stomach time to signal your brain that you are full. The result is that it translates to decreased nibbling and increased energy and productivity later on.

THE ABSENTEE OWNER

These lost souls are dreamy, unconscious eaters who often don't even notice they're eating. While they're licking an ice cream cone, they're also day-dreaming, reading, shopping, or watching television. Suddenly, they realize with a shock that the ice-cream cone has mysteriously disappeared.



THE GIVER Givers try to be all things to all people and to perform many functions at a time. These people, often mothers, spread themselves too thin in their workloads, while their waistlines, not so ironically, often become considerably thicker. They telephone committee members, wash dishes, referee family squabbles, cook dinner, and write a report for work while at the same time picking away at food.

Make it a routine to eat only when you are sitting. There is no joy in eating on the run. Such eating is not satisfying and it encourages nibbling. It's interesting how, when you eat on the run, the mind erases the meal but the body doesn't. If you sit down at the table every time you eat, you will naturally pay more attention to your food. You will then enjoy conscious eating and you will remember that you ate.



THE TIME TRAVELER To get the most satisfaction from your food, your focus must be in the present. Time travelers either dwell in the past (feeling guilty about what they've done) or the future (worrying about bad things before they happen). John Curtis, founder and director of the University of Wisconsin Stress Management Institute believes that 90 percent of stress is brought on by not living in the present moment and worrying about what's already happened, what's going to happen, or what could happen.

Accept responsibility for the past, face the future with confidence, and focus on today, learning to taste, savor, and enjoy. It seems obvious, doesn't it, to taste and enjoy each bite? Why then is it so rarely practised?

Experiment with this theory. Try eating the same breakfast (one day in a hurry and the next day relaxed) at the table and actually tasting the food. Do you notice a difference in how long it keeps you satisfied?

Eating on the run or while focusing on what you have to do next rather than on the moment at hand deprives you of the psychological pleasure of the present. Constantly living for the future deprives you of the enjoyment of what is going on now. Take the time to savor the enjoyment of discovering your inner being as you begin to realize that you are important enough to pamper yourself with the time to taste and savor your meal. After all, *you count!* Experience HUGS™ and allow it to work for you.

George, a member of the HUGS™ group, came to class one day and told us that he had had second helpings because the food tasted so good. On further probing, he noted that he was rushed to get to class and he had hurried through his meal. He pointed out that normally he would have been amply satisfied with the first helping. Make sure you try this exercise. It will give you new insight into the true meaning of tasting and savoring your food.

As well, it is important to ensure that you are eating

the foods that you love. HUGS™ gives you permission to choose anything you want to eat. There are no good foods or bad foods, no “do’s” or “don’ts.” You can eat anything your body loves to eat. *Listen to your body.* At first you may hear your body say it wants all those “forbidden” foods you never allowed yourself when you were dieting. But as long as you eat only when you’re hungry and stop when you’re full, your body will soon crave the foods that it needs for your health and well-being. *Care enough to listen.* Be creative. Savor all the flavors of your food and drink, and when you eat, enjoy the food without washing it down with liquids.



VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

Ann felt that she was doomed to suffer on a medically prescribed low-fat diet. She ate the same thing everyday for breakfast and lunch. There was a little more variety in her dinners but there was certainly no surprise or anything out of the ordinary to perk up her taste buds. She was bored, bored, bored with her food plan. No wonder she was prone to nibbling and feelings of deprivation.

It is so important to have something different to eat that is enjoyable so that your mind and attention are drawn back to the eating experience. New recipes, a variety of different breads and cereals, brightly colored vegetables, a new way of presenting an old favorite meal, or any number of other “attention grabbers” can be used so that they will register psychologically and you will know you have eaten.

Presentation of the meal can add to the enjoyment. It’s fun emphasizing different colors and textures. Try not to fall into the trap during the winter season of the humdrum vegetables and fruits that are far from exciting when you see them over and over again. Carrots, apples, and oranges are great, but if you don’t think of different ways to serve them they become monotonous.

When the fancier vegetables and fruits are out of season they are more expensive. But if you are unsatisfied with the meal due to its lack of “oomph” you will follow it by a rich dessert or chocolate bar to

YOU COUNT,
CALORIES
DON'T

satisfy your psychological craving.

Switching over to the HUGS™ way of eating may involve eating a greater proportion of vegetables and fruits that are more costly when out of season. However, clients tell me that overall, their food bills are less because of less consumption of convenience foods. Finding more satisfaction from the regular meal reduces the tendency to want more later on. Compare the difference for yourself and you may be pleasantly surprised!

LEARNING TO TASTE, SAVOR, AND ENJOY

Eating slowly can maximize your enjoyment of food and provide an earlier feeling of fullness for a given quantity of food consumed. It will also slow down the release of sugar into the bloodstream. Eating quickly can minimize your enjoyment of food and fool your body's appetite control mechanism into wanting more.

Listening to classical music while you eat may decrease your appetite and benefit digestion. A recent study performed by the Health and Stress Clinic at Johns Hopkins University shows that people who listened to classical music while eating took longer to finish the meal, took fewer bites per minute, and were satisfied with one helping. Those who listened to rock music and marching tunes ate faster, ate more per forkful, and asked for second helpings.¹



Does focusing on your eating mean putting your fork down between bites? Think about it. Isn't this an external cue? It may work for a while, but it's not natural and may be difficult to internalize as a new way of eating.

Is filling up on water before a meal the answer? You will feel bloated and will not be able to eat as much. Is this dealing with your physical hunger or temporarily trying to avoid it? Will it not lead to greater hunger later on?

Naturally slow eaters do not put their forks down between bites. Start observing slow eaters. They are often slimmer but not because of dieting. Nondieters naturally focus on eating, while they are eating. On

the other hand, while talking, they may put their forks down and focus on the conversation. For them eating is not automatic, it is conscious and they are tasting every morsel and enjoying their food.

In order to slow your eating rate, be patient and practise the following techniques until the old patterns are replaced by new ones. The purpose of these techniques is

- to interrupt the process of automatic eating,
- to give your stomach a chance to register to your brain that you are full, and
- to slow down the release of sugar into the bloodstream.

These methods and techniques can put you on the road to slower eating.

TECHNIQUES TO INTERRUPT AUTOMATIC EATING

- Create a relaxed atmosphere prior to eating so that the mood is set to enjoy the meal. Classical music in the background may help create the mood. Dine, don't simply eat.
- Focus on what you are eating (taste, flavor, texture, and aroma) while you are eating. Don't smother your food with too many condiments that can mask the flavor. As you gradually cut back on the fats and enhance the flavor with herbs and spices, you will begin to enjoy the natural flavor of food.
- Build in a "pause" partway through your meal. Pause during your meal: start with 30 seconds. Gradually increase time to 1, 2, and 3 minutes. Initially, this may be a conscious effort to interrupt the process of automatic eating. This "pause" will help to put you in touch with your feelings of hunger and fullness.
- Focus on the food and the eating of it while you are eating. When you are talking to others, place your fork down and focus on the conversation. Otherwise, you end up talking with your mouth full of food and deprive yourself of the true enjoyment of either activity. Practising this technique is more natural than the artificial method of putting your fork down between bites.
- Come to the meal pleasantly hungry, but not famished. This will help to regulate your speed of eating. Build in snacks if you anticipate that your meal is going to be delayed.
- Be less efficient when eating. For example, when you are having a soup or salad and sandwich, don't be so organized that you eat the soup while holding the sandwich in the other hand. Then you will finish the meal in no time. Instead try making the soup piping hot and finish it first prior to starting the sandwich. Then you are fully enjoying the soup

and extending the time frame of your meal. Or eat a salad prior to the meal. Its texture will get you into the habit of chewing food more and will help to slow you down. After all, it's your special time. Enjoy it!

- Focus on the attitude that goes along with eating slowly rather than simply the behavior. In other words, if you sit down for a few minutes when you get home, it gives you a chance to break the "rush-rush" momentum that might have been built up all day. It allows you a chance to reflect on the day's activities. Plan for the meal, and maybe include a snack before dinner to avoid nibbling everything in sight. When you are pleasantly hungry it creates the right mood to help you eat more slowly and naturally.

VISUALIZATION: MAKING IT HAPPEN

Eating slowly is not simply a change in behavior; it's a state of mind that in turn will motivate you to fully experience on a regular basis the tastes, textures, aromas, and flavors of dining. Visualizing or imagining yourself as being relaxed before you begin the meal, and tasting and savoring your food as you eat will help. Stop at times, put your fork down, and engage in conversation. Your speed of eating will slow down more readily.

To demonstrate how effective this technique can be, say the following scenario to yourself while soft music is playing in the background. This creates a relaxed atmosphere.

"I have just come home from work. I do some deep breathing and a few stretches for a couple of minutes. Feeling relaxed but hungry, I go to the fridge, get myself a snack (i.e. crackers and milk or whatever I find to be appropriate as a snack). I sit down at the table and enjoy the snack. I get up after 5 or 10 minutes, prepare the meal, and feel less anxious at mealtime. I am able to enjoy the meal and actually feel less hurried. My appetite is pleasantly stimulated for this meal. I'm glad I stopped to have a snack before I ate dinner. Now I can taste and enjoy the food. I am enjoying talking to my family. I stop eating at times to talk to my family about some of the pleasant events of the day's activities. I find myself tasting my food so I am eating more slowly. I realize that whenever I'm hungry, I can get myself something to eat so there is no need to clean off everything on my plate. I am satisfied now. I leave the table

feeling satisfied, but not overly full.”

Now close your eyes and picture yourself eating in this manner. Visualize it. See yourself as this new person in charge of your eating, simply because you are enjoying the food, the moment, the company, and the event. Do this at least once a day until it begins to happen naturally and what you visualize becomes reality. No matter what the occasion you will find a way to enjoy it. Your fork still goes down once in a while which puts the “pause” in your eating, allowing you to decide if you really want more. It breaks the automatic eating and gives you a chance to feel if you are still hungry or are simply eating because the food is there.

Eating quickly may result from allowing yourself to get too hungry. Or you may eat too quickly to prevent the food from getting cold. Think about it. Are you actually allowing yourself to taste and savor the food when you eat quickly? Eating the food more slowly, even if it is cooler, allows you to extract more flavor and tune into the texture and get the enjoyment from the experience of eating. You are learning to view food in a different way.

If you are still concerned that this slower way of eating will allow your food to get cold, try heating the plates beforehand. Some people put them in the heat cycle in the dishwasher or in the oven on low heat. Actually, I find the food still tastes great even though it may be lukewarm. The flavors are more pronounced at this temperature. The extremes of temperature, whether it is very cold or very hot, do not allow you to experience the most flavor.

This total enjoyment of the food and the event will eventually allow you to be satisfied with less to eat. The end result of eating smaller portions may be the same as diet programs but the reason for arriving there is different. It is now *your choice*. Learning, practising, and enjoying add up to health benefits. You have different preferences which help regulate your feeling of fullness. You eat less for different reasons. You are in charge and you make the choices. The valuable skill of visualization can be used with

any type of activity or change that you would like to implement more quickly into your life-style. Athletes often use it prior to a big event, when they focus on their style, to gain poise and concentration.

You can imagine yourself more active. For example, if you close your eyes and see yourself walking and enjoying it, then you are more apt to want to walk. In this way, you have instilled a positive message in your mind about walking.

When trying this method to help internalize different skills or gain confidence, focus on the action involved. Imagine yourself being positive and making the life-style changes that will help you achieve a healthier body rather than focusing on looking thin or seeing yourself as slim. *Focus on the enjoyment of the process, not the end result.*

REASONS FOR LOSING CONTROL OVER FOOD

As long as you continue to avoid your favorite foods (ones that may be high calorie or high fat) without confronting the reasons behind your continued cravings, you will continue to deprive yourself psychologically. This sets you up for overeating these foods when you are finally exposed to them.

You want to eat but it isn't because you are physically hungry. You are upset and haven't confronted the situation. You are afraid to confront it so you continue to eat to make yourself feel better temporarily. Feelings of anger, frustration, or loneliness seem to be relieved through eating. However, you are still faced with the situation at hand.

If you continue to ignore your problem or deal with it in an ineffective manner, you will never resolve it and this cycle of eating may lead to gaining more weight. This will further lower your self-esteem. You won't have a good feeling about yourself and you will never be able to take control of the problem and of the food.

During your childhood you may have learned to keep your emotions to yourself. Pent-up feelings of anger can be very bad for your health. Displaying

anger in a negative way is called aggression. Displaying anger in a positive, controlled manner, is confrontation which is a form of assertiveness.

Initially, you may want to use distraction to relieve some of your anger. Try going for a walk or going away from the situation to give yourself a chance to gain perspective. This may give you the opportunity to sort things out and better understand what is really troubling you and what you really want to say.

Think before you talk; otherwise, you may say things in anger that you do not really mean. Voicing your feelings in a constructive way can set you free from those pent-up emotions and keep you from feeling the need to eat to fill this emotional void with food. State your request or your complaint clearly and in a positive manner. Think it through and deal with the situation rationally. You will never know the outcome unless you try to deal with the problem. Spouses or friends cannot read your mind.

It is essential to go back and discover the reasons for your eating and the reasons why you are eating compulsively. Treating your overeating by going on a diet is only a temporary solution. Awareness of the reasons for your overeating is the first step to permanent success.



Congratulate yourself for every success and every new awareness. Change is stressful, so introduce changes gradually, taking it one step at a time. If you introduce just one new life-style change this week and repeat it at every opportunity, it will take root and you will take a major step forward. Your aim is to make one small and concrete change and to really enjoy the way it makes you feel. One can derive much satisfaction from the awareness that you are on the right path, one that you alone have chosen to take.

This awareness can lead to action. It allows you to continue to practise the skill of confrontation with regard to the situations themselves, not only with food. After all, it may be the situations that are causing you to eat. If you can make the effort to deal

YOU COUNT,
CALORIES
DON'T

with them, the need for food as a crutch or comforter will no longer be necessary. It will be much easier to eat only when you are actually physically hungry.

Compulsive behavior can be expressed in many ways. The workaholic has compulsive behavior that is accepted by society. Yet it can endanger health by putting both physical and mental stress on the body. The resulting burnout affects eating and activity habits. The person becomes stressed out and may compensate by eating too much.

**EXAMPLES TO HELP YOU WORK THROUGH YOUR NEW SKILLS
AND HELP YOU DISTINGUISH PHYSICAL FROM
PSYCHOLOGICAL HUNGER.**

Example 1

Jane walks by a bakery, smells muffins, and wants to have one. This is an example of psychological hunger where Jane is responding to an external cue. She smells it, she wants it. Does she really want it because of hunger or is she just used to responding to the external cue?

What kind of learned skills can she use? An urge to eat builds gradually like a wave, peaks, and gradually reduces. If Jane keeps on walking, the urge may go away if it was elicited simply by the smell of the muffins and she wasn't physically hungry.

If there is a psychological reason for feeling hungry, she may try to confront the urge. If, as Jane keeps walking, she still desires the muffin, there may be another reason for wanting it. She could find out the reason and deal with it using confrontation skills.

If Jane walks into the bakery and really wants a muffin because it is her favorite chocolate chip type, should she have one? Yes. If she doesn't, she may think about it for the rest of the day, then raid the fridge when she gets home because she feels deprived.

Jane orders the muffin she wants. She is selective and orders only what she wants. She remembers that most of the satisfaction comes from the first and last few bites of what she is eating. So she tastes and savors the muffin but notices that it doesn't taste as good as it did in her mind. She packs up the rest for her dog. Her other option is to leave whatever is left once she has satisfied her urge.

On the other hand, if Jane was really hungry, a muffin may not be the best choice. Many muffins are high in fat and sugar which may send her blood sugar for a roller coaster ride, especially on an empty stomach. And what about all that fat that will just go to body fat? She could try not to let herself get too hungry.

Example 2

It's 4 o'clock and you are usually hungry at this time. What type of hunger is this? It may be either physical or psychological.

What kind of learned skills can you use? If you haven't eaten for about 4 hours you are simply physically hungry. In that case, have a snack. If you try to hold off until supper, you may end up famished by that time. This is no way to go to a meal. It does not allow you the opportunity to taste and savor your food.

However, if you had a snack at 3 o'clock, but you always come home from work hungry, this may be caused by the let down of the day, by loneliness, or habit. You are the only one who can determine what kind of hunger it is and use the appropriate skills to handle it. Confront the urge and deal with the cause.

Check with yourself on the role that food plays for you and your family at different times of the day. Do your children need a snack before supper? Are you concerned about them spoiling their supper, so they remain hungry and cranky until supper time? The idea of a snack is simply to dampen hunger, not to spoil the next meal. Arrive at the table pleasantly hungry, not starved.



**YOU ARE WORKING AGAINST YOUR BODY
WHEN**

- you ignore your natural hunger signals and undereat at the expense of health,
- you overeat to find emotional satisfaction from food rather than from other parts of your life,
- you undereat to try to change your body shape to what you feel is accepted by society,
- you overeat because you are not paying attention to food to derive both physical and psychological satisfaction from it.

Learn to work with your body. Tune into the enjoyment of your life in balance. Meet the situation head on, and delight in your progress.