It’s Not What You’re Eating….It’s What’s Eating You”

When Food is More Than Fuel-Exploring Our Complex Relationships with Food

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Food Is:

Using the index card provided, quickly complete the sentence stems,

“Food is............”

“Eating is............”

“Hunger is............”
The Beginning

Pre-Birth-
No hunger, no discomfort- perfect temperature, constant food supply, comfortable environment (a bit crowded), no problems with ingestion or elimination

Post-Partum
Issues with food and hunger, elimination, temperature, surroundings, discomfort-must rely upon others to get needs met. Generally, eat when hungry, stop when full.
Early Years

Food begins to become linked with relationships-nurturance during feeding as infant, food becomes “more” than food-food comes to represent celebration, acceptance, nurturance, family togetherness, culture, religious significance, prestige, love. For humans, it is impossible to separate food as fuel from it’s other roles.....
Childhood

During childhood, society and family begin to attach judgment to:

- body shape and size
- physical appearance
- eating habits
- food preferences

When did you first feel judged for how you looked or what you ate (or did not eat)?
Timeline

As time goes on, food, weight, and eating become more and more related to things other than simply fueling the body. Disordered or uncomfortable eating patterns develop over time and become a way to cope with a variety of events in our lives. We still eat when we are hungry—but, sometimes, what we are hungry for is not food.

**Using the strip of paper provided, create a time line—beginning at birth and extending to your present age. Include the first time you were aware of eating when you really were not hungry, diets, binging, times when you felt judged because of food or weight, and other significant events in your historical relationship with food and eating.**

**Stand up—move about, gently touch 6 people on the shoulder, then pair with a 7th and share significance from your timeline.**
Adolescence to Adulthood

During adolescence, body changes, changes in relationships with others, and increasing pressures often ramp up disordered eating patterns. Peer pressure, pressure from society, pressure from romantic partners, sex and other issues become bound up with food and eating. For many, early adolescence is the onset of the first “diet”.

Patterns established in childhood and young adulthood often persist into adulthood-using food as a reward, for nurturance, to substitute for “feeling”, as avoidance, as protection, as a way of feeling special, for control. If we are overweight, the “fat” can become a convenient hook upon which to hang all of our problems. Who we see ourselves as becomes clouded by our issues with food and weight.
Who Am I?? Introducing Yourself

On an index card, write, "Introducing _________________.

I am ......
I am ......
I am ......
I am ......
I am ......
I am ......
I am ......
I am ......
I am ......

Write your answers quickly, without any pre-judgment or censoring.

Turn the card over.
Without Food Conflicts......

I would ......
My life would ......
My friends would ......
My family would ......
My days would ......
My appearance would ......
My energy level would ......
My productivity would ......
My dreams in life would ......

When the music starts, move around the room, taking your card with you. When it stops, pair up with a stranger. Read your answers, to each other, first the “woulds”, then the introduction. Discuss your reactions.
Overcoming Disordered Eating

Susie Orbach’s Keys

Eat when you are hungry.
Eat the food your body is hungry for.
Find out why you eat when you are not hungry.
Taste every mouthful.
Stop eating when you are full.
Overcoming Disordered Eating

Geneen Roth’s Breaking Free Eating Guidelines

Eat when you are hungry.

Eat sitting down in a calm environment. This does not include your car.

Eat without distractions. This includes radio, TV, printed material, electronic devices, tense or anxiety producing conversations, and most music.

Eat only what you want.

Eat until you are satisfied.

Eat in full view of others.

Eat with enjoyment, pleasure, and gusto.
Overcoming Disordered Eating

Miriam Bilich’s Weight Loss From The Inside Out

Examine the power of fat.
Examine the reality of thin.
Examine your relationship with your body.
Eating Awareness.
Examine the power of food.
Reactions to the Guidelines

Form a group or 4-6. Look over the guidelines from Orbach and Roth. Discuss within your group.

Which guidelines make you uncomfortable? Why?
Which guidelines do you already practice?
Which guidelines are completely new to you?
Other thoughts? What would happen if you followed the guidelines?
Hunger
Your body has an amazing ability to monitor its own needs. However, after years of eating for reasons other than hunger, we can become disconnected from our body’s hunger signals. Take a minute to think.....

1. How do you know you are hungry? What physical sensation accompanies TRUE hunger?
2. How do you feel about allowing enough time so that you feel true hunger?
3. Where does you first sensation of hunger originate? Are there other feelings that cause sensations in this area?
4. When you begin to feel hungry, what is your emotional response?
Awareness of Hunger

Satiating hunger involves careful thought and awareness about what exactly you are hungry for. Leonard and Lillian Pearson describe 4 types of hunger:

- **Stomach Hunger**: empty feeling, growling, “hollowness”—a need to be filled—true hunger
- **Mouth Hunger**: tingling, emptiness in the mouth—often a need for a particular taste or sensation
- **Throat Hunger**: tightness or dryness in the throat—a need for something wet, cool, perhaps tingly
- **Gum and Teeth Hunger**: a need to chew
- **Tongue and Lip Hunger**: a need to suck and lick food

Which type of hunger do you have most often? Which emotional reaction most often masks itself as hunger for you?
Selecting Foods-Enjoying Foods

When you allow yourself to get hungry, you must then choose a food that will satisfy that hunger. Carefully reading your body’s signals about the type of hunger and reviewing what types of food can satisfy that hunger will help you to choose wisely. Susie Orbach suggests keeping a journal that details all foods eaten, ranked using the following scales:

Hunger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very hungry</td>
<td>comfortable</td>
<td>stuffed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Hunger Level</th>
<th>Feeling Before</th>
<th>Feeling After</th>
<th>Where Eaten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Food Awareness

Food Awareness Exercise: Hershey’s Kiss

Power of Food-Guided Meditation

Choosing Foods- Foods that **beckon** are foods that “call” to you because you have seen or smelled them, because they are “there”. Foods that **hum** are those which will satisfy an inner craving. Careful thought when you are hungry will allow you to choose foods that will truly satisfy that hunger. When you want a particular taste (sweet) or sensation (cool), you can make choices based on your needs.
Choosing Foods

When you begin to eat what you crave, you may fear...

- Not being able to stop
- Never again wanting to eat food that is good for you
- Gaining weight
- Binging
- Losing control
- Other fears??

In fact, when you STOP forbidding certain foods, when you allow yourself access to them, when they are no longer eaten for the “last time”, their power gradually diminishes.
Problems With Eating for Hunger

1. What if I am not hungry at my family’s mealtime?
2. What if I get hungry “off” schedule?
3. What if I am not sure what I am feeling is true hunger?
4. What if I am constrained in getting the food I want? (ie-travel, work, lack of access)
5. What do I tell people?
6. How do I deal with disapproval about what I am eating?
Eating with Enjoyment

Think about your best friend. You have decided to prepare a meal for your friend. What do you do?

Do you carefully choose and prepare foods you know she loves?
Do you ask him what he wants you to cook?
Do you set a beautiful table and give care to food presentation?
Do you take your time with the meal and enjoy the fellowship?

You would NEVER-

Ask your friend to eat standing at the counter, table, or fridge
Serve your friend food in the car
Ask your friend to eat with his hands food that was meant to be eaten with utensils
Have your friend hide with you so no one else could watch you eat
Have your friend eat food that was frozen, left over on someone’s plate, poor quality, or poorly prepared
Read a book, watch TV, or interact with media during a meal

If you would not do this to a friend, why would you consider doing it to yourself??
Analyzing Food Choices

Once you have imagined a food, take a minute to:

Think about its taste, feel, smell before you eat it.

Once you have decided upon a food, taste it. Notice very bite. You deserve to eat with enjoyment and pleasure. When you stop savoring it, stop eating. Eat slowly. If you have difficulty telling when you are full, take breaks from the table, go to another room, and allow yourself to monitor your hunger. After you have eaten, monitor your body. Some foods, even though they “hum”, may produce unfavorable reactions in your body. You may need to make other choices that fulfill that need. Respect your body and the way foods make it feel. Respect yourself enough to trust your choices. Over time, you will relearn how to eat for nourishment instead of eating for other reasons.
Analyzing Hunger

If you are not sure if you are hungry, or you can’t settle on what you are hungry for, you may not be hungry for food. Your hunger might be emotional. If you eat to quell your emotional hungers, your feelings will still be there. Try to quiet yourself and feel the emotion. Are you angry, sad, lonely, afraid? Do you need to talk to a friend, take a hot bath, go for a walk, journal, ask someone for a hug, have a good cry? If you can’t come up with a good answer, allow yourself to feel regret that you cannot label the feeling, and pleasure that you did not try to use food to avoid the feeling.

Guided Meditation
Things to Accept

You will sometimes eat past full or eat for the wrong reason.

Your body may not be designed to be the weight you have always seen as ideal. However, your body will settle at an appropriate weight IF there is no physical disorder.

When you are stressed, you will tend to default to old patterns-HALT-do not get too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired.

It is not a sign of weakness to have boundaries or to ask for what you want.

Overcoming disordered eating takes time, effort, and introspection. It may also require guidance from a therapist or support from a group.

Your scale has only the power you give it.

Food is just food. It is not bad or good. It has only the power you give it.
Overcoming Disordered Eating

Susie Orbach describes 4 stages:

1. Acknowledging that there is a problem

2. The Beginning- Rebelling against years of deprivation

3. The Middle- Learning to trust yourself

4. The Joys of Breaking Free

Navigating these stages take time and effort and a willingness to feel.

Guided Meditation
Resources

Books by:
Susie Orbach
Geneen Roth
Hilde Bruche
Leonard and Lillian Pearson
Marion Bilich (hard to find)