

Self Acceptance Starts with Making Peace with Food

“It’s almost like I don’t want to waste my hunger on something unless it’s absolutely wonderful! It is surprising how much food is either bland, oversweet or artificial once you taste it properly.”

-Jomay, UK

Say Goodbye to Dieting participant

Throughout the centuries, images of beautiful, full figured, shapely women have been revered, adored, sculpted, drawn and painted. For many years, the epitome of beauty was considered to be a woman of ample proportion, with large breasts, thick waisted, with a full stomach and wide flowing hips. Yet in the early 1920’s, illustrator Charles Dana Gibson sketched the first image of what would later be called The Gibson Girl, a tall slender, narrow-waisted, ample breasted woman with a thin neck and delicate shoulders, with a waist cinched in by a swan bill corset accentuating her voluptuous hips and full bust. This hour glass Barbie doll-like image of beauty would soon take the world by storm, pushing every woman and girl to hope to look like her.

This unrealistic representation of one man’s perception of a woman’s beauty became what some argue as the first national standard for a feminine beauty ideal. For the next several decades, in the west a national mania developed with women trying to look like this imaginary iconic figure of beauty. Little girls everywhere still play with Barbie dolls, envy their shapes and wish that that one day they may grow up to look like them. The sensation-driven and destructive media machine fueled by national advertising puts the thumb screws to women pressuring them to believe that thin is the only acceptable standard for judging beauty. Is it any wonder that we’ve been under the thumb of diets for much of our lives?

Up until now, we’ve been swept up in an illusion that has distracted us from our lives and stripped us of years of pursuing our right to be happy, keeping us blinded by our own limiting beliefs, and preventing us from hearing the rumblings of positive change underfoot. In many ways, the seedlings that make up our internal self image, have been smothered, steeped in fear and shame, living sparsely, barely existing, crumpled up inside a cramped box with very little light, sunshine or exposure to the world.

Our precious blooms have been crushed, strangled or worn away by the years of devastating erosion of our internal self critical voices that have been so deafeningly loud and unmistakably annihilating that anything that doesn’t ring true to the gatekeeper in each of us, automatically gets rejected. This is the power of your subconscious mind. To lift the cover off that box and expose our delicate blooms to the world, giving them nourishment to grow and flourish, we must be enthusiastic and ready to become aware of what is happening now and be willing to adapt our thinking and question the beliefs that keep us in fear. It starts with a simple change of thought.

The importance of reframing your negative All or Nothing thinking

Now as my Nana always used to say, “let’s get down to brass tacks and find out what’s on the agenda for today.” I’m a meat and potatoes gal so I like substance. I’m assuming you feel the same way too so that’s why I’ve packed this section full of lots of mouthwatering goodies designed to teach you to think about your body, your cravings and your relationship to food and eating in a totally different way. These are the mental games or reframes that I referred to in the chapter on NLP Presups. Now looking back in hindsight, I understand that it is essential to learn how to think differently, before you take on the challenge of making peace with food because as long as you are caught in the old all or nothing thinking, also called the diet mentality, you won’t be able to switch gears and appreciate the gentleness that comes with intuitive eating because you’ll be inclined to hammer yourself every time that you overeat or make what you consider a mistake.

As a visual metaphor, consider that by using the harshness of the diet mentality to reason your way to understand how to eat intuitively, and acquire the ability to feel safe around food and love and respect your body, is akin to reaching for a jack hammer to hang up a picture. Not very effective, with all that pounding pressure, you’ll end up demolishing the entire wall. In reality, all you need is a few gentle taps with a sissy hammer.

Comment [AA1]: Karen, is this a good metaphor, or can you suggest another?

Beyond the simple scope of just learning how to eat differently, intuitive eating is an entire about face that requires that you learn to think differently. That’s why I recommend that you make the phrase, “Be Gentle ____ (say your name)” and make that your new mantra, repeating it often to yourself from this point forward. Because by knowing how to play new empowering mental games with yourself, you will invest in your success and get tremendous returns with that small bit of effort. Remember, Be gentle.

Here in this portion of the book, you’ll learn about a whole secret or perhaps not so secret society of women who are out there, making their presence known for the sake of empowering women to love their bodies, cheerleading us curvy gals with constant reminders of how beautiful we are right now. Then later in the chapter called Loving Your Body and Act to Attract, I’ll build on those resources and share specific strategies that you can use to integrate the thoughts and ideas of these pioneers into your life and make the dream of loving your body an actual reality. For now, I just want you to know they are there for you and where to look, because remember according to the law of attraction, in order for you to change the things you attract, you have to learn to focus on what you want. Doing this will put you in the right vibe and make things so much easier.

Yummy! There’s plenty of good, hearty stick-to-your ribs substance on the agenda in this section. In fact if I do say so myself, to quote Mo’Nique in the movie, Phat Girls, it’s pretty, hot and thick which is what the acronym, “PHAT stands for!” Let me first get you started with several juicy morsel story appetizers and bits designed to flip your thinking upside down by shaking the foundation of your limiting beliefs, thus clearing the blocks and distortions in your energy, freeing the path to empower you to take action and think more kindly and compassionately toward your body.

Comment [AA2]: Karen, does this reference add a spark of interest for the reader?

As you continue to read this book, I want you to keep in mind how important the whole concept of energy is and how your thoughts affect your body. Remember that in the Getting Reacquainted with Your Body section, I mentioned the four different ways of managing energy in the body. Well this part of the book will be helping you to move a lot of old thought debris and clear out those blocks and bring in new wonderful empowering ideas that will shape your world and ultimately help you to create new habits effortlessly that will reshape your body.

After you've savored my story appetizers, completely, or if you absolutely feel that you must speed ahead, on page , you're ready for the next step, so I'll serve up the main course, a process I learned when I first decided to get off the diet roller coaster. It's called Intuitive Eating. It will give you all the guidelines you need to learn to become a normal eater.

The challenge to you is to take this information about intuitive eating and resist turning it into just another diet. That's what I did. I got all loopy and wound up, tangling myself in my old diet-y way of thinking. Miss perfectionism, that's me. You see as great as Intuitive eating is, it doesn't teach you how to change your limiting beliefs and cope with the emotions that push you to eat anything that's not nailed down, but I will. I want to give you the benefit of being able to learn from my goofs!

Juicy Woman Note: Since I'm a bit of a Type A personality myself, I would understand completely if you're chomping at the bit, eager to skip ahead and get right to the goods, but as a woman who endured a 35 pound weight gain, because I made this very same mistake, not learning how to think differently before I learned the guidelines, I urge you to read through and understand all the information that precedes the how to-s on intuitive eating, because without having the appropriate mental framework, you are likely to have similar consequences if you make the same hasty assumptions that I did and turn something that is so natural and gentle into something very complicated and rigid.

Remember how the law of cause and effect applies? If you do one thing, you get a certain result. Well in my case, I barreled through and took those guidelines literally and made them the

Comment [AA3]: Karen, sorry about this quirk with the coding. I wanted to box the text for the Juicy Woman note and it did this odd thing to the rest of the content. Anyway the word, "Remember" follows the boxed note.

most important things in the world to me and lost all sight of everything else. As a result of not knowing what in the world to make of them and overanalyzing their simplicity, I became so obsessed with food and my body which led all my insecurities to resurface, and that feeling of being so unsafe and uncertain led me into a lot of fights with my family. The stress that I was under led me to argue constantly with my husband, which put a real damper on my feelings of connection with him, and put our sex life in the toilet.

My stress load was off the charts and I couldn't stop eating. That's all in addition to the other upsets that were going on in my life that my husband was trying to help me face which I was desperately trying to avoid, like coming to grips with the fact that my financial security had been pulled out from under me, and I was being betrayed by the person I felt closest to all of my life, my own father!

Still being very much like my father at the time, I refused to be gentle with myself make things easier, so it was inconceivable to me to consider using alternative ways to deal with my stress besides eating. Although I knew that EFT worked to dissolve cravings in minutes, I was being a bit of a martyr and refused to rely on anything that I knew would make things easier. No crutches. I promised myself that I wasn't going to use anything that would help – so I toughed it out and dealt with all the pressure that I was under by eating. I reasoned that I was eating intuitively, but in reality, I now know that I was just eating and not listening at all to my body, because I wasn't ready to do anything else but do whatever I could to zone out. Looking back in retrospect, I now realize that I wasn't open to receiving any messages other than “Eat, Andrea. You'll feel better so I kept eating until one day when I looked in the mirror, and faced the fact that I had allowed myself to regain 35 pounds.

I was positively mortified knowing that I was teaching my clients the same method I was using, but unlike me, I was encouraging them to use EFT to deal with their stress. Most of them kept on getting thinner, while I kept getting fatter, because my runaway appetite kept me in patterns of overeating and binging all the time. Until one day, everything changed and the constant weight gain stopped.

Obstacles are what you see, when you take your eyes off the goal...

One day in June 2007, nearly 10 months after I started to learn how to eat intuitively, I was leading a special group class discussion on Resistance with several of my members who were experiencing some problems. Shoshana and Giana were both extremely frustrated because after so many weeks of enjoying great success eating what they wanted and noticing their appetites reducing naturally and beginning to crave lighter foods, they were starting to fall back into patterns of overeating. Repeating what I had learned by listening to the Beyond Dieting audios, I explained to them that resistance was actually evidence of things working, because the negative emotions would not have triggered if they weren't doing so well. I explained to them that I had just learned this myself and wasn't certain of how it works, but encouraged them to think about it and to be more gentle with themselves.

Then I led them to tap and deal with their emotions around what was happening with them and food. Shoshana wanted to explore why she couldn't stop eating potato chips again after she had decided that they were not as tasty and delicious as she used to think they were. So we tapped on her craving for potato chips and by the end of the call, she felt a little bit better.

I, on the other hand was really feeling bugged, because although I had learned that resistance meant things were beginning to work, it didn't feel true to me, in my bones, and I was completely obsessed over the fact that I couldn't get my appetite under control. But since it was a big day, I knew that I had to set aside my train of thoughts and get dressed for my son's graduation.

Once we arrived at the school, we were all seated and watched as the first speaker rose to give his speech. I wasn't really listening to what he was saying, because I was so focused on my inner critic shouting at me saying,

“Andrea, what the hell is the matter with you? Why can't you figure out why the hell you can't stop eating? You're a friggin' fraud telling your clients what to do and not doing it yourself.” Whatever happened to walk your talk? You're certainly not walking your talk. You're so full of crap. You shouldn't even be a coach. Who the hell do you think you are? It's no wonder you're as fat as a house. You'll never be able to lose weight. What the hell were you thinking that you could eat what you wanted and not gain weight? What are you crazy?”

As I sat silently beating myself up, I was stunned back into the room when I heard the speaker say, “Obstacles are what you see, when you take your eyes off the goal.”

Suddenly a river of my truth tears came flooding down my cheeks because in an instant I knew some part of what was wrong. All this time, all these years, I had the wrong goal. My goal was to lose weight. I wanted to get thinner because I thought that would make me happy.

Then my thoughts took off again. “Who the hell was I kidding? I wasn't doing this for any reason other than to be able to lose weight.” I couldn't imagine taking the risk that I had to give up a long standing successful weight loss of nearly 6 years and not being able to figure out how I could eat what I wanted without gaining weight. What a huge sacrifice that I had evidently gambled on and lost. As far as I was concerned this just wasn't working for me, and I was thinking about going back to dieting with my tail between my legs, practically begging Weight Watchers for forgiveness. It was pitiful what I was thinking, until I heard him repeat what he said,

“Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal.”

I got it, right then and there I knew I had to change the goal. I had to change the goal from losing weight to learning how to love and accept myself now as I was, with all the extra 35 pounds on me and my new round, fat belly and my ever present big fat thighs.

In the next moment of clarity, I realized then and there that the nasty way that I had learned to talk to myself was the same critical and disparaging, intimidating way that my father had spoken to me for years. I realized in many ways, I had become my father.

As I thought more about what the speaker said, I knew that I was facing so much resistance at looking at the things in my life that were pushing me to change and grow up and take responsibility and I had been caught up in knee jerk responses of wanting to hide, so it showed up with always wanting to eat.

So as I sat newly stunned listening to his words, hearing them reverberate in my head over and over, I knew that I was ready to accept this new larger, and to my way of thinking, less attractive version of Andrea. That didn't require a change of eating. It required a change of thinking. I had to overhaul my thinking in order to get to that point, because I only saw myself as I imagined my father used to see me, as a fat blob who had no self control and that was only fueled my desire to eat all the time. In order to break that abusive dynamic, I knew that I had to find wells of compassion that I didn't yet feel for myself which meant stepping out of looking at myself from his eyes and starting to see the real me, excess weight and all, perhaps for the first time. So I resolved to look for what had long been missing, me.

When I began the process of learning how to eat intuitively, I was so hungry for details and specific information because as you'll soon see, the intuitive eating guidelines are relatively few and not very clear. I read many wonderful books talking about the process, but that didn't help me to get what I wanted. I didn't want theory or a slew of facts, I wanted to learn from other people's experiences. I wanted someone to help me make the path easier.

No matter how many books that I read that was written by many wonderful experts in the field, I realized that I didn't find the level of disclosure I was seeking because they were well into their recovery, far past the point of significant weaknesses, having long forgotten what it was like to struggle with the vague guidelines of intuitive eating.

So I decided to write a book and share what I've learned and add my unique insights and value as an abuse survivor, coach and NLP practitioner. Since I am still in the relatively early stages of my own recovery, I'm still in the process of figuring it all out, which means that my battle scars are fresh still fairly new, yet by sharing much of my process with you and giving you the benefit of my hindsight you can enjoy the richest experience and gain from my goofs. You can either do what I did which is roll a big boulder up the mountain and create your own mental obstacles or learn from my experience and enjoy a much easier path to food freedom. I hope that it helps to make your journey smoother.

After I give you a taste and reveal the guidelines, I'm going to teach you how to better understand what's behind your urges for specific foods. I'll show you how to decode your cravings and look beneath the surface and explore what I like to call your crazings, which are really just the things that are bothering you fueling your desire to eat. In this

section, I'll also help you break down the various types of different hunger so that you can recognize each of those buggers when they hit.

Like me, you've probably been hating yourself, relentlessly judging and criticizing your poor body that's been through years of diet-wringer hell, trying desperately to diet and exercise your way to achieve that perfect hour glass figure that we all assume every man lusts after and every woman prays for. Believe me, I know how that feels to wish that you could just chop off big hunks of excess fat and slice yourself to bits until you're down to the perfect size. But you're not a side of beef and butchering isn't the answer.

It's understandable why you may feel that way, but have you ever once thought to stop and ask yourself why you're being so damned mean to yourself? Are you running around like me, with the voices from your past still haunting you? Why is it so important to look like someone other than yourself and why in the world do we hate our bodies so much?

Why Do We Hate Our Bodies?

As I mentioned in the introduction, I explained that in the midst of a hotbed of emotion, memories stick to every cell of your body like glue and form a powerful imprint on the brain, creating associations that become beliefs that govern our habits and lives. You actually learned how to hate your body by the many experiences that you've had in relationship to it. Who knows when it happened. The point is it did and it left you feeling bad about that beautiful woman who stares back at you in the mirror each morning. You!

It could have come from years of being criticized for everything you ate, what you did, didn't do, or should have done, or being made fun of in gym class when you fell down exposing those awful yellow bloomers as they rode up baring the full girth of your fleshy thighs to the entire 6th class, or getting bombarded daily with images of the beautiful people, skinny stick figures or Gibson Girl hour glass shaped models and celebrities whose airbrushed and retouched faces haunt you every time you pick up a magazine or watch TV. It's the constant never ending, deafening relentless reminder that you are a bigger woman, with larger hips, wider thighs, a rounder, fleshier belly and fuller arms--and because of that you don't measure up and that means you're not good enough to be included or thought of as one of the beautiful people.

Maybe the seeds of doubt were first sown the day that you felt demoralized and hopeless, standing in a puddle of your own sweat, after spending hours in too many dressing rooms with horrible lighting, fighting like hell to fit into pants that were two sizes too small, or playing yet another version of the body comparison game every single time a more attractive and thinner woman walks in the room, or pining away, wishing and hoping that you could have that same body you had when you were in high school, or keeping those size 8 clothes hanging in your closet just hoping that they'll motivate your size 16 body to get thinner, and most of all I think it comes from years of feeling pressured to swear off eating the foods you love, ice cream cones and chili dogs, cookies and peanut butter sandwiches, chocolate bread pudding and Mom's home made lasagna only to eventually give into a full fledged binge and eat everything in sight just a short while later.

It makes me want to cry when I think about all the years I wasted seeing myself as nothing but a number or letter on a clothing tag or a set of measurements, a pair of droopy breasts, fat thighs, or a list of foods eaten on any given day. Somewhere along the line we, as woman, have lost our sense of perspective and forgotten to recognize the true value of who we are as people; vibrant, gracious, gentle, kind, honest, faithful, wise, intelligent, inquisitive, sensitive, playful, creative, passionate, determined wonderful human beings filled with the capacity to love and be loved, overflowing with gifts, talents and wisdom. Somewhere along the way we fell into a dark narrow crevice and stopped thinking of ourselves as people and started buying into the notion that we were just a collection of assorted body parts.

Role Models: Real Women Actionists Who Are Putting Barbie in her Place

The sad truth is that body obsession is a national pastime. And despite our distorted perceptions of our appearance, we're all beautiful women. Yet nearly 4 out of 5 of us hate our bodies. Thankfully now in 2009 there's a movement that's been underway for a few years celebrating curvy and cuddly women's beauty and encouraging us to expand our collective consciousness towards our bodies, step out of our self imposed ugly girl closets, ditch our envy of Barbie doll's perfect figure and settle into reality and learn how to love and accept our bodies as they are right now.

This shift of consciousness has been gradually picking up steam and if you listen closely and pay attention to the right blogs, radio stations, magazines, movies and books, you can tune into many of it's wonderful, deeply empowering, heart warming, life affirming messages,

"Beauty is not defined by size."

"Accept yourself as you are."

"Real beauty comes from within."

"Have confidence in yourself."

"Your weight is not your worth."

"Love Your Body"

"Be true to yourself."

"Be the change you wish to see."

"PHAT, Pretty, hot and thick."

"Dress the body you have, not the body you want, and so many others."

We have much to be grateful to the leaders and pioneers in this movement creating this perceptual revolution. Among the many leaders blazing the trail for size acceptance are the incomparable Jessica Weiner in her 20+ year role as a best selling author, activist and now as the Global Ambassador for Dove's Self Esteem Fund dedicated to transforming the self esteem of women and girls around the world, the Dove organization with the Dove campaign for Real Beauty, showing us that beauty comes in all forms, shapes, sizes, ages and colors, Nancy Bruno's Beautiful Women Project, a collection of essays

and photos of real women from age 3-93 accepting and loving their bodies, NOW Foundation's West Hollywood Women's Health Project with the launch of the Love Your Body campaign started back in Sept. 1998, making a national day of action to speak out against advertisements and images of women that are harmful, offensive, disrespectful and demeaning. Still going strong now, led by celebrity host and actress, Kim Coles of Living Single and Chenese Williams, a multi-talented plus size model and actress.

Beautiful women of all shapes and sizes are starting to come together and make a stand for change, causing the fashion industry to experience the shift from the changes created by the beautiful and bold plus size models that get up and go to work literally putting their bodies on the line everyday making the statement that beauty extends far beyond a size 2.

Fearless beauties like Olga Ramos, the only size 22/24 model working in print, and Mia Amber Davis, the stunning face representing the Ashley Stewart line, are women who step out of the box and look at the big picture and create images for our daughters to love their bodies.

As a writer, Deborah Gregory, is another real role model for size acceptance. The beautiful and Cheetahlicious icon creator of the entire Cheetah Girls empire, empowers young women and girls real role models for size acceptance. Shapely and curvy, Raven Symone, who many of us remember growing up with her as Rudy on the Cosby Show now is a powerhouse leading millions of women and girls to love their bodies at any size.

Every single day these beautiful, confident and curvy women stand up believing in themselves, reminding us to be proud of our beautiful shapely sexy bodies.

Yessirre, The face of beauty in America is getting a much needed, long overdue makeover. In the fashion industry, it's common knowledge that up to 64% of all women in the US are a size 14 and up. Yet for a long time up until fairly recently full figured and plus size women were not represented in high fashion.

On May 15, 2008, supermodel, actress and celebrity, Tyra Banks and her panel of beauty experts crowned its first full figured winner, Whitney Thompson. Although Whitney was a size 10, she was still considered by the size 2 dominated fashion industry to be grossly overweight. Yet she won the title anyway, despite the size discrimination and all the nasty hurtful comments about her weight.

Prior to her win, in 2007, during Season 3 of America's Next Top Model, another plus sized model named Tocarra Jones was a strong contender for the title of America's Next Top Model. At 180 pounds and a size 14, Tocarra is a much closer representation to the average sized woman, yet unfortunately in the end she did not win the title, however she did set a new precedent by being the first plus sized model on the show. Perhaps it was Tocarra's presence last year on ANTM breaking ground that made it possible for Whitney's win in May. Who knows what will happen next and what wonderful ripple effect that will have on fashions for the curvy gal.

Comment [AA4]: Andrea, add the comment about Whitney's weight and the observation about America's plus size women

All around us celebrities, icons and actresses like Oprah, Mo’Nique, Queen Latifah, Mia Tyler, America Ferrara, Kathy Najimy, Whoopi Goldberg, Camryn Manheim, Rosie O’Donnell, Nigella Lawson, curvy, proud, bold, beautiful women who are willing to step up and share honestly their struggle with weight and recognize that their ability to accept their bodies is rooted in their ability to love their bodies. These women are among our many rising role models.

There is a new wave of positive body loving messages coming our way through the medium of television. Celebrity stylist and former co-host of Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, Carson Kressley hosts the Bravo show, “How to Look Good Naked” and TLC’s fashion makeover show “What Not to Wear. is headlined by celebrity stylists and fashion expert/hosts, Stacey London and Clinton Kelly These are just a few examples of the many pioneers working tirelessly in their efforts to guide us to recognize our uniqueness and see our bodies in a fresh new wonderful bright light. Yet there’s none so blind as those who will not see.

Opening Your Eyes to the Possibilities Before You

Up until now, we’ve been swept up in an illusion that has distracted us from our lives and stripped us of our happiness, keeping us blinded by our own limiting beliefs, and preventing us from hearing the rumblings of positive change underfoot. In many ways, the seedlings that make up our internal self image, have been smothered, steeped in fear and shame, living sparsely, barely existing, inside a box with very little light, sunshine or exposure to the world.

Our blooms have been crushed and strangled because our own internal self critical voices are so deafeningly loud and destructive that anything that doesn’t ring true to the gatekeeper in each of us, automatically gets rejected. This is the power of your subconscious mind. To lift the cover off that box and expose our blooms to the world, we must be willing to become aware of what is happening now and be willing to change our thinking and question the beliefs that keep us in fear. It starts with a simple change of thought, flipping your old negative thinking on its ear. These are the mental games or reframes that I referred to in the chapter on NLP Presups, known as Frame Games.

Losing Weight vs. Making Peace with Food

There is so much more to life than obsessing about food and weight. When you discover that on a real heart felt level, you’ll be in awe of the power that you have over your choices.

It’s one thing to understand something with your head, but it’s quite another to really get the message in your heart. That’s when big changes start to take place and your life moves again.

I’ve come to think of my experience, my obsession with food as a sort of ice age period. During that time, so much of my life was static,

unmoving and dead.

Even though I was able to achieve certain successes or squeeze out some joy, I was surrounded by my need to feed my obsession, food. My every thought revolved around how I looked at any given time, how I would next feed the hunger beast inside of me and how to keep myself under control at all times. It was exhausting.

That obsession superceded everything in my life. When I was living under the tyranny of dieting, and later when I began to learn how to eat intuitively, whenever my stress would get too high, it would inevitably lead me straight for the next binge. During those times, nothing would be more important than food, not my husband, my kids, my family, my commitments, nothing mattered more to me than food. It was my drug of choice.

I don't know about you but one of the most degrading things for me about being an emotional eater was always feeling like I could never control my runaway appetite. I always used to think that I was a bottomless pit, a volume eater, dare I say it, "a garbage can." It didn't much matter if I ate a whole bag of potato chips, a pint of ice cream, and a pound of chocolates during a binge or an entire bag of frozen steamed vegetables and a head of lettuce when I was "in the zone." I just always thought of myself as a big eater and accepted that as being who I was. That was me. Andrea, the animal. I was wrong. Now I know that my desperate sense of hunger was not rooted in my body, it came from unfulfilled emotional needs that I had gotten so good at suppressing. As a result, my cravings and my voracious appetite led me around by the nose.

Comment [AA5]: Karen, I chose to substitute the word, emotional eater for dieter. What do you think? Does that make it more inclusive of both circumstances?

Over the years I'd heard my father say, "Andrea, For God Sakes, "you have no self control, You have no friggin' discipline. If you could just push yourself away from the table, and stop eating...yet despite the desire of wanting to lose weight and get thinner, I wanted the food more. I swore that I was a slave to my cravings. I swore it was the taste of the food and my lack of control that kept me coming back for more.

Over the years, I've engaged in just about every illicit, undignified and demoralizing eating behavior that you can think of having to do with food; lying to myself and others, eating stale or moldy left overs, raiding people's kitchens and pantries, retrieving formerly tossed food from the garbage, offering to clear the table, as a way of getting to eat the scraps, smuggling food on my body, concealing snacks everywhere, sitting on the cold hard tile of the bathroom while stuffing my face, keeping a food stash, stealing bites from my kids' plates, manipulating my husband to order dishes that I wanted to eat and eventually commandeering his plate, and any other sad and desperate act associated with feeling hopelessly and helplessly deprived.

Doing these types of things made me think of myself as a pig with no sense of discrimination or propriety around food for a really long time. That image of myself as being out of control and disgusting and disgraceful only added fuel to the fire, increasing

my hatred and disgust towards my hopelessly distorted view of my body. That's why I'm sharing what I've learned about becoming a discriminating and picky eater with you, so you won't have to live for a moment longer with fears and feelings of hatred toward your self like I did. There is hope and no matter how out of control with food you fear that you may be, you can change, but as I learned you have to start calling a truce on the war with your poor body and making friends with it. I'm talking about, all those parts of yourself that you curse every time you look in the mirror. For me the battle always raged around the size of my thighs and until recently the three of us have never been friends.

How about you? You've probably been despising your 'wobbly bits,' haven't you? That's the legacy of dieting. Remember in the previous chapter, I explained how our fat cells plump up more as a result of the fallout of yo-yo dieting? That's what's probably happened to your body.

The truth is you may or may not be overeating, but somehow, somewhere along the way you adopted some very distorted beliefs about food and your curvy body and if you want to ever come to the point of accepting yourself as you are right now, then you need to find some balance in your relationship with food, because we just can't run away from ourselves, can we?

Believe me. I've tried. For years I avoided full length mirrors.

Comment [AA6]: Karen, let me know if you think this paragraph adds to the chapter or not.

But let's be real, that's not always possible. Have you ever stepped out of the shower dripping wet, naked, you reach for your towel and for just a moment you catch a glimpse of yourself, with all your wobbles intact; noticing every scar, flaw, imperfection, lump, bump, wrinkle and bulge. Your jaw drops as you glimpse a pair of droopy breasts, flabby arms, a rounded muffin top stomach, a pair of fat legs, saddlebags, and a wiggly, jiggly butt. You stop for a moment and wonder to yourself, "Who in the hell is that pregnant woman in my mirror" Then you realize it's you. Shocked and disgusted, you just want to hide your head under the covers and disappear from the world, only to come up for air eventually seeking the soft safety of food.

Calling a Truce on the Body Wars: If Not Now, When?

As my friend Anisa says, "we're living in a gravity world, baby and we're gravity girls" And though you might choose the quick fix allure of taking the surgical path of snip and clip, chop and drop, it's much easier and far less expensive learning how to like what you've got right now. Because if you don't, you'll forever want what you don't have and your glass will always be half empty.

I've learned that if you ever want to call a truce on the war with your body, you have to first start by making peace with food. Please understand that the truth is no matter how many muffins, cakes, pies, potato chips, steaks or fries, you eat, you will never be able to fill that part of you that longs for real true fulfillment, love.

Like me, I'll bet you probably thought your problem was that you had an insatiable appetite, a bottomless, ravenous desire to eat that no amount of food would ever satisfy. Perhaps for far too long you've been bullied into thinking that something was wrong with you and it's not. Many years ago for whatever reason, you were introduced to the concept of dieting and someone you trusted swore on a stack of bibles that it would work. Well it hasn't. Despite denying your internal wisdom and intuitive feelings deep down in your heart that said, "this wasn't the answer", you valiantly stuck it out, managed to plow through the doubt, trying your best to make it work, but instead of making things better, it only made them worse. As you learned in the previous chapter diets just don't work. It's not you who has failed dieting. Dieting has failed you!

Dieting Has Failed You!

It's not personal There's no reason to be sad or ashamed. It just is, what it is. Diets suck. Make no bones about it. They make big promises and deliver nothing but heartache, because in your quest to try to stick to the diet and be a good girl and not "cheat", you do your best to ignore or avoid all the foods you love. As a coach, I've got to ask you, "How's that been working out for you?"

Probably not too well. Dieting relies on restricting food intake, it doesn't teach you how to eat the foods you really want and feel safe with them around. There is no diet in the world that would ever give you permission to eat potato chips or chocolate for a meal, or make it anything more than just a supporting player. The buzz word here is moderation. According to diets, you must eat healthy foods and consume goodies like chocolate and chips in moderation. But who are we kidding? Those are the go-to-s when your world is tumbling all around you, and the skies are gray and gloomy. But diets don't leave any room for those kinds of things to happen in your life. It's all much too straight laced and rigid, so you try your best to be good and avoid altogether those foods you love, or play the silly game of substitution. Maybe you've actually convinced yourself that you don't really love those greasy potato chips anymore and you really dig those veggie versions. Maybe you do, maybe you don't. Who knows? But you'll never find out until you vow to stop playing all the games with food that diets have taught you to play.

What Games Are You Playing with Food and Exercise?

In his fabulously brilliant book, "Games Slim & Fit People Play: Winning the Fit and Slim Game, NLP co-developer, author and speaker, L. Michael Hall, Ph.D, cracks the code and makes it clear as a bell that diets have taught us to think in ways that keep us stuck in acting out behavior that keeps us fat."

You'll recall that in the introduction we spoke about the importance of flipping things around and looking at situations from a more empowered perspective. That's one of the core foundations of NLP, finding what works. This flipping or seeing something from another angle is called a reframe. To get a mental image of how that works it's like taking a Rembrandt painting and framing it in a run of the mill discount store frame, vs. putting

a beautiful frame around it that fits the time period and looks appropriate with the painting.

Because we were taught by people who were recipients of inaccurate hand-me-down information and distorted beliefs, we bought into a belief system about our bodies and our relationship with food that keeps us stuck in fear mode.

Perhaps you know of someone in your past who never had a problem with eating. She/he ate what they wanted, whether it was mashed potatoes, chocolate cake or crème brulee, and when they were satisfied, they no longer wanted the food. This is the wisdom of the grandmothers. That's what's known as moderation. But in our diet obsessed society, that word's gotten a bad rap. We've lost all sense and respect for its meaning, because to our diet deprived ever hungry minds, the word, "moderation" means food restricted based on someone's say so or the rigid rules of an eating plan, it becomes a push-me-pull you, tug of war that ends up in a binge,

To give you an analogy that may feel right to you, think about a diet as a disapproving or abusive parent who never is satisfied with anything you do, finds nothing good to say and is always looking to find fault with you. Putting that into context, it's no wonder that a binge is considered the equivalent of having a temper tantrum.

So now going back to the concept of frames, let's look at some of those frames that influence your subconscious habits and choices and end up keeping you in food fear fueling your urge to binge.

See if you can recognize some of your thoughts in these food and exercise frame game statements.

Frame Games for Food

- "I eat to feel loved and rewarded." Game
- "Eating is so relaxing and fun" Game
- "I can never say "No" to food because I'd feel so deprived" Game
- "I have to eat everything on my plate" Game
- "I just gain weight looking at food" Game
- "Making mistakes and overeating is terrible" Game
- "There's no middle ground. I'm either perfect or I've screwed up again" Game
- "I'll never be able to get beyond my own resistance. I'm my own worst enemy" Game
- "Oh God, another day of eating out of control" Game
- "I tried so hard but nothing works for me" Game
- "I better lose weight now or else I'll be miserable" Game
- "I'll never be thin and beautiful" Game
- "I'm fat because my husband irritates me so much that I have to eat" Game

Frame Games for Activity

- "Why does exercise have to be so hard?" Game
- "Ain't it awful how out of shape I'm in?" Game
- "Who has time for exercise anyway" Game
- "No matter what I do, I'll always have these fat thighs" Game
- Poor me. I'll never have pretty legs. Mom has fat thighs and her mom did too and I'm genetically predisposed to always having this big fat butt" Game
- "No pain, no gain. In order for me to benefit from activity, it has to hurt" Game

Now let's do a flip, reframe these statements and notice how you feel with the new mental frame games. The following frames are designed to get you thinking about food and activity in a much more joyful and lighthearted way. See if it works for you.

Frame Games for Food

- "There are so many things that I can do besides eating" Game
- "I have so many blessings in my life that I can stop and appreciate now" Game
- "I love tossing food out, or wrapping it up for later. I like being in charge" Game
- "I'm willing to take time getting to know myself and feel safe around food" Game
- "I love being able to eat anything I want and know that my body is slowly and gently reshaping and getting thinner naturally" Game
- "I take great pride and pleasure in recognizing that food isn't good enough for me" Game
- "I really dig knowing that I can eat anything and I choose to eat foods that make me feel good" Game
- I welcome resistance. It tells me things are working. It's a natural part of the process and maybe it's letting me know that it's time to lower my bar just a little, and be extra nice to myself" Game
- "I love eating fresh fruit and vegetables now" Game
- I love being able to notice all the tiny nuances of what foods tastes like" Game
- "I don't like eating when I feel bad, pressured, guilty, sad or angry" I can stop for a moment and deal with those negative emotions and then eat whenever I feel better" Game
- I'll never be able to get beyond my own resistance. I'm my own worst enemy" Game
- "I enjoy my meals even more when I'm feeling hungry" Game
- "I'm tired of playing games that keep me fat" Game
- "Every day in every way, I'm getting better, better, and better" Game
- "Every 'mistake' is a wonderful opportunity for me to learn what really works"
- "I'm exactly where I need to be now" Game
- "No matter what I deeply and completely love and accept myself" Game
- "I feel safe and good about myself around food" Game

Frame Games for Exercise

- "Exercise is just thinking time" Game
- "Exercise is what allows me to shape my body" Game
- "Exercise is my de-stressing time" Game
- "I love taking the time to move my body while I create a sense of feeling thin at any size" Game
- "Being more active makes me feel good" Game
- "Exercising is my time to write on the run" Game
- "Exercise gives me vitality to stay alive" Game
- "Everyday exercise helps me to clothe myself in my right mind" Game
- "Time to do something special and wonderful for me" Game
- "It's so nice to know that I don't have to push myself to the point of pain when I exercise" Game
- "Being more active makes me feel lighter and more energetic" Game
- "Exercise is fun" Game

As you can most likely see it's the above frames that make you feel good and give you a sense of possibilities. Don't they? Those are the new types of frame games you'll get to play throughout this book. I urge you not to get hung up on the specifics of each one. I only gave you some general example from Dr. Hall's book and pulled a few of my own. Just keep in mind that we get our frames from looking at what we believe.

As I'll continue to mention throughout this book, as you change your beliefs and reshape your thinking, you will not only get the fat out of your head, it will also come off of your thighs, stomach and butt too and anywhere else that it's been weighing you down, but the question is are you willing to play your old games and get what you've already gotten, or are you ready to try out some new ones?

Aren't you sick and tired of playing silly games that leave you feeling deprived and helpless? That's what happens when you deny yourself of things you love. That's the deprivation game that you've been so used to playing. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to stop playing the I have to deprive myself and avoid temptation to lose weight game and instead change your tune to Food is my friend. I can gradually get thinner, while I eat things I love and learn to trust my body.

Let's face it, dieting has kept you in a cycle of playing lots of dopey and disempowering head games with yourself. If you're ready to start playing some winning games that will help you to get thinner without dieting, then this is the chapter for you.

If you're ready to live comfortably with what you now think of as temptation and find out what makes you want to eat when you're not hungry and deal with those issues, head on, then it's time to say goodbye to dieting. Are you willing?

I can assure you that by giving up dieting, you are most certainly not giving up! In fact it's probably the kindest thing you'll ever do for yourself. Because by actually learning how to listen to the wisdom of your body, you will eventually naturally gravitate toward foods that make you feel good inside and out. The side benefit is that you will get thinner,

because you will eat differently. Even if you still choose to dine on cake and ice cream, you won't require the same large amounts to satisfy you. You'll enjoy food more and get satisfied more quickly.

Most importantly of all, saying goodbye to dieting means that you are actually demonstrating a great deal of compassion, love and self respect by being willing to rattle the illusion that your body is the source of all your problems Please keep in mind that I'm not suggesting that you kick dieting and do it without a plan. That would lead to catastrophe.

By dealing head on with the buggin' yous in your life, you'll realize that your body is not your enemy, it's your best friend, and when you realize the great potential that lies in you, your relationship with food will fall into a harmonious balance. Getting thinner becomes a wonderful side benefit of a happier and more peaceful life.

If your doctor prescribed a medication that had a 98% failure rate, would you be willing to risk taking it? I don't think so. Neither would I. Yet I banged my head for over 34 years trying to make diets work for me. I swore it was my fat thighs that were the butt (pardon the pun) of my problem. Anything that wasn't working in my life, I could pin on the size of my thighs.

Comment [AA7]: Karen, this is bugging me here, because it seems like I still have not allowed the reader the benefit of feeling comfortable and ready to give up dieting. Don't you think by this point in the chapter, I should treat that as a given?

Let me ask you, if you fell down and broke your leg would you reach for a band aid? Never. Dieting is no different. It's the band aid that we've been promised that would fix everything, but the problem is not what you are eating, it's what's eating you!

Throughout the book, I'll give you many wonderful strategies to deal with the buggin' you's in your life. However right now, the only thing you need to do is to give yourself a pat on the back and a ton of credit for being a Diet Survivor. You did it. You made a wise decision. You're finally free from diet prison! Now it's time to step beyond that cycle of hurt, and move beyond it to empower yourself and learn to trust your body again. You can do it. I have faith in you.

Now keep in mind that unlike dieting, where self torture is the norm, there is no need for any cattle prods, battering rams or thumb screws. You can check those babies all at the door, because now things will be very different. You're going to learn how to be really really, really nice to yourself and compassionate towards all your juicy bits and feel safe and comfy around any kind of food.

The Roots of Your Food Obsession

The problem is you weren't taught to do that and the foods you love have long been labeled as forbidden. Who knows when it happened! That doesn't matter. Maybe as a kid, you may have been told that you couldn't trust yourself around food. Maybe like me, people stood over your shoulder and counted your M&Ms, rationed your chips or cookies and eventually put you on your first diet, forcing you to walk to your Nana's house at lunch time and eat salad and steamed broccoli while all the other kids stayed in school

trading hostess snowball cupcakes, Hawaiian punch and Drake's chocolate chip cookies at lunch.

Here's what you need to know, somewhere along the way you got your wires crossed and started thinking about food as more than just a means of filling a hungry tummy. That really monkeyed around with the energetic balance in your body, causing you tons of stress. All of a sudden your beloved food started to bear so many unnecessary burdens because it was no longer just associated with pleasure, but now it was also getting linked up with pain.

Instead of just eating the amount of potato chips that it would take to satisfy your body's physical hunger, now all of a sudden there's an emotional and moral burden that weighs heavy on your mind, saying, "you shouldn't be eating those chips." "To hell with it", you say, as you defiantly scrape off the last of the salty bits at the bottom of the bag, noticing that queasy feeling in your stomach all over again.

Ultimately in order to overturn that rotten apple cart of defiant and disordered eating, you have to neutralize the charge on the conflicted emotions that instigate the need to eat those chips beyond the point of satisfying your hunger.

I'd venture to say that years of wanting what you've been told you can't have through dieting has led you to feel helpless and overwhelmed by your cravings. You may have found yourself living to eat, instead of eating to live. Perhaps your life has been revolving around food and your addiction to it. Maybe you decided that you are a lost cause and somewhere down deep you may have even quietly surrendered and reconciled yourself to being fat forever.

It doesn't have to be that way, but in order to climb out of that hole, you have to be willing to commit to yourself and stand by you, no matter what. You see you've been led to think of yourself as your own worst enemy. Because fat is so deeply despised in our society and the media has everybody believing that only toothpick thin models are beautiful, you were conditioned to look at your body and think of yourself as a fat person.

Remember what I said in the introduction about events and memories sticking to you like velcro? That's exactly why I'm offering you so many ways to do neutralize the charge on those negative memories and emotions because it's just like being able to scrape off all the gunk that is stuck on you from years of being convinced that you should probably hate your body.

I'll bet that you probably have a memory in the back of your mind that stands out for you of a time when you learned to think of yourself as worthless, fat, stupid, ugly or hopelessly incompetent. I sure do and before I launch into the guidelines of Intuitive Eating, I'd like to share my story and maybe that will spark a memory and you'll remember yours.

[My Big Fat Thighs: So Many Sighs Over Size](#)

Who would ever think that there would be so much fuss over how we look? For me, I believe that my obsession with my body really kicked into high gear early on. I remember one particularly memorable event that cemented itself in my brain as an iconic symbol for how I would think of myself for years to come.

The background of my story is that my parents divorced when I was about 8 years old and I went to live with my mother. Around 9 years old, Mom remarried and she took my baby brother, David and I and we all moved to Florida. I hated it there and just wanted to go back and be with my father who I adored. I was always the apple of his eye.

When I was about 11 years old my dream came true and I had the opportunity to return to New York and live with my dad and his fiancé, Rosie. At the time, I didn't know her very well, so I wasn't sure if I liked her or not.

To my way of thinking, she was so beautiful with the looks of a model. She reminded me of Cher, with her bold confidence and striking features, with her long naturally curly dark auburn hair, big beautiful brown eyes and a petite slender figure. To my young mind, I knew dad was crazy about her because they were always so happy together and he showered her with gifts of furs and jewelry.

One day I was shopping for school clothes with Rosie and dad at the Bergen Mall in New Jersey. We had been shopping for days and now we were making the rounds going through every department store in the mall trying to find pants that fit me. We had already been through the entire length of the mall and now we were walking our way back to the very beginning. I was exhausted. We ended up in Lerner Stores. While Dad sat outside waiting for us, Rosie and I combed through the racks and grabbed armloads of pants ranging in sizes 12 -14.

Before we went into the fitting room, I said a quick silent prayer that this time something would fit. "Please God help me". I said. We'd been through so many stores and after trying on clothes all morning, I was sweaty and tired and hungry. I felt awful, wishing that I could fall through the floor. No matter where we went, nothing was fitting me and I was getting frustrated. It seemed that every pair of pants I tried on wouldn't budge past my fat dimply thighs.

Convinced that I must have had the biggest butt and thighs in the world, I felt so ashamed of my chunky little body. As I got close to the bottom of the pile, I picked up speed starting to breathe heavily and wrestled desperately with the buttons, buckles and belts on each pair of pants, a couple times I even remember grabbing them defiantly from Rosie. I was so furious with myself as I kept wondering, "Why was I so fat? Why were my thighs so big? Why couldn't I find pants that fit me? The big sizes that managed to go up over my fat thighs were way too big on my waist.

Comment [AA8]: Karen, let me know if you like the additions that I included describing the scene.

Comment [KL9]: Yes! I, and readers, love visuals. Even smells and sounds.

What's wrong with me?" I couldn't stand the pressure or the heat any longer.

The dam burst. I started wailing, crying hysterically, I stood feeling helpless and ugly and fat, in those damn pants that wouldn't go up past my thighs, in the middle of Lerner's fitting room. I'd lost all control. I was so completely overwhelmed. After an embarrassingly tearful display of what I considered a real lack of self control, we walked out of the store. Silent and empty handed, we headed down the mall to have lunch at Wolfie's, my favorite deli. Eating usually helped me feel better no matter what or where. At Wolfie's, I used to love to pick up the dill pickle slices in the barrel with the pickle tongs that the waitresses placed on our table. It was usually such fun. It reminded me of going fishing. But this time I remember I didn't touch the pickles and I choked down my food, probably because my stomach was already upset from being too hungry and crying so much.

The silence was so thick you could cut it with a knife. After lunch Dad said I needed to get shoes, so we headed to Baker's in the mall. I still felt pretty raw from the break down that I had earlier, and just wanted to go home, but I had to get shoes for school. Like my thighs, I also hated my wide feet.

As the salesman tried on shoe after shoe, with nothing fitting, I looked over and saw Dad's expression. He looked utterly disgusted. I watched him make his way over to a display called Earth Shoes. They looked like orthopedics, old lady shoes-so hideously ugly I wanted to die. I felt the tears welling up inside me again. Could he really expect me to wear those?

He picked one up and said, "I'd like to see this in an 8 in whatever colors you have." I was stunned, shocked, stupefied. As the salesman returned with his arms full of boxes, a part of me zoned out. I could feel him putting the shoes on my feet and lacing them up, but I was lost in my thoughts. "These have to be the ugliest shoes in the world and nobody in school would wear them. Everyone will make fun of me. I was shaken out of my reverie when dad said, "Okay, They fit. Time to go home."

The ride back to Manhattan was silent. Soon after we settled for the evening, I was told that since we couldn't find any pants that fit me and we'd already been looking for days, with absolutely no luck; Rosie's sister, Aida was going to make my clothes. I was mortified. I figured I must have been so fat that no store would carry my size. I cried myself to sleep that night. Several weeks later, Aida came over to the house and proudly unwrapped her creations.

There were about 12 pair of pants with elastic weight bands and big muumuu tops with ties that looked like maternity wear. That's when it hit me. This was who I was. I was a fat girl!

Making Friends with Your Body

For me, it was earth shoes and muumuus. For you, your image of your shadow self may be entirely different. By whatever fancy name you choose to call it; psychological reversal, self image, fat and ugly self image, negative self image, negative programming, it's the part that is really calling the shots.

The thing to keep in mind is this, whatever internal picture of yourself you have as an emotional eater, that's the part of you that needs more love, and compassion because despite every conscious attempt you make to lose weight and get thinner, if that part of you doesn't feel safe, nothing you do will work.

Because as I've mentioned several times before, you can't be slim, if you're thinking fat.

Comment [AA10]: Karen, I'd like to box this idea and have it stand out for the reader.

Otherwise you'll experience what I did with runaway eating leading to a tremendous weight gain.. This is why it is so important to learn how to use the energy coaching techniques that I teach you throughout this book, because they can get your hunger under control and override the negative programming stuck in your subconscious mind.

Try It: Getting Reacquainted with Your Little Girl

Take some time and go through any photo or albums that you may have and find a picture of yourself as a little girl. Look for one that epitomizes the essence of who you were at a certain memorable time. You'll know what age feels right to you as you shuffle through your pictures. Look for the one that demonstrates the phase in your life where you learned that it was unsafe to feel whatever you were feeling and that in order to be acceptable, you had to stuff down your emotions. If you are unable to find a picture of yourself as a little girl, either draw one or think of a loaded, word, or image that best represents the characteristics that you remember from your childhood that make up your inner little girl. I remember just once my father said, Andrea, you'll get so f*7% fat, Some day I'll be able to roll you down the hill like a f*&* meatball." Hence, at one time a picture of a meatball rolling down a hill would have reduced me to tears. Not anymore, I can assure you, thanks to EFT. Get creative and go fishing inside yourself and find that shadow side of you.

Your picture may show a toothy ten year old, with mussed up hair teetering on the monkey bars, or a chunky, pimply faced thirteen year old with sad eyes trying to smile for school pictures or a gangly young teen whose eyes are filled with uncertainty because she was always told she was "too fat and boys don't like chubby girls." No matter what age you choose, that picture will best represent the little girl inside of you who wants to eat when you're not physically hungry. Put the picture in a place where you can see it everyday. Doing this will remind you to be compassionate, and love and accept yourself no matter where you are in this process.

Everytime I think of myself in those damned ugly earth shoes and tops that looked like muumuus, I just want to hug that sad and insecure little Andrea part of me and tell her, "Sweetie, it will be alright." Now having that picture in my head, gives me a much

greater awareness of my humanness and vulnerability at a time when I was only just beginning to shape my ideas about life.

It's really helped having a bead on that little Andrea, because it's made it much easier for me to understand why I do the things I do and it makes it easy to be compassionate towards that desperately needy little girl in me.

That paves the path to forgiveness and helps me to be open to new ways of doing things in a much kinder and gentler way. I rarely talk to myself in the same nasty way that I used to. This is one of the greatest benefits that you'll ever get from learning this process of intuitive eating, learning how to do things in a loving, respectful and gentle way.

That's why I want you to really have a clear reminder of that scared and uncertain part of you that has felt that dieting has been the only way to achieve happiness. Now speaking of happiness, let me introduce you to the ultimate in food freedom, a process called intuitive eating.

What is Intuitive Eating?

Have you ever watched a baby being nursed or bottle fed? Perhaps you've noticed that infant turn her head away at some point during the feeding. That's because the baby is paying attention to the feeling of fullness in her tummy. She is responding to her body's hunger signals. By turning her head away from the bottle or breast, she is honoring her hunger, indicating that she doesn't want anymore food.

The problems often begin with mom, in her belief that she knows best what the baby needs, she will try to cram that bottle or breast back in the baby's mouth to make sure that they're not hungry, because, according to what she learned from watching her mom and other women in her family, she knows that a full baby is a happy baby that will go right to sleep without a fuss. Don't blame her. Poor thing, she was probably suffering from sleep deprivation and had to do whatever she could to ensure that she would get a few solid hours of rest. Overfeeding is the quickest solution.

Just like the baby, we all have that same ability to listen to our bodies, eat when we are hungry, and stop when we are satisfied. However after years of dieting, you may have learned to mistrust your body and ignore the sensation of hunger. You may have been told to fill up on low cal foods and drinks in an effort to control the feast beast lurking inside of you.

Despite that negative programming, it's very simple to get back on track and pay attention to your body so that you can eat what you want and lose weight naturally without dieting, pills, gadgets or gizmos.

All you have to do is relearn how to trust your body again. As I've mentioned before, your body is already doing a great job for you in other areas. It tells you when you need to relieve your bladder, regulates your heart beat, blood circulation, and sleep rhythms, and so much more. Face it. Your body is a miracle. That means that you can also trust it to regulate your weight.

Six Steps to becoming an intuitive eater

Step #1 - Say Goodbye to Dieting. Yippee! Now you get to toss out all your old diet books, stop counting calories, points, carbs, or fat grams, and for goodness sakes, stop thinking of food as either good or bad. To your body, it's all equal. I know it sounds crazy to think that a chocolate sundae and a piece of cheese can be considered equal to your body, but I'll explain how after you get these guidelines.

The truth is, in terms of nutritional content, naturally there are foods that are healthier for you and more beneficial, but for the sake of making peace with all food, you have to level the playing field. The goal is to learn to rely on your body to gauge what is right for you. No more diets.

You may also want to ditch your scale since it will only continue to light up your internal fat circuit board by virtue of consistently reigniting the mind body connection, reminding you in no uncertain terms, "I'm still fat." I'll explain this in much greater depth in the chapter called, "Love Your Body."

But here's a common scenario that you might relate to that shows how that old piece of scrap metal can ruin a perfectly good day:

Have you ever experienced this?...

You wake up feeling good, you've been a bit more active and been eating less food lately. You have somewhere important to go to today. You jump on the scale to get a quick bit of positive reinforcement and to your shock and dismay, you see that you have gained 2 pounds. You instantly feel depressed and upset. You glance in the mirror at yourself and suddenly it seems like you are heavier than you were just a minute ago. Oh Sh..., you scream, as you run downstairs desperately seeking ice cream. "

Okay, 'Nuf said. Step away from the scale.

Step #2: Pack your pantry and stock your fridge. The battle is over. Give yourself unconditional permission to eat what you want, REALLY! In a restaurant, order what you really want to eat, not what you think you should. By doing this, you will quickly develop new abilities to be discriminating. You will soon learn that you truly can trust yourself with all foods. I'll take my steak rare, with the fat left on it please!

Step #3: As often as you can, eat only when you are physically hungry. By doing that it makes it easier to say, "No", when you're not feeling that physical urge to eat. Here's what you need to know to understand a bit more about how to eat in accordance with your body's natural hunger. Generally speaking it takes between 5-9 hours to fully empty out your body's energy reserves. If you've eaten a full meal, your body will not be hungry for quite a long length of time.

When this concept of eating in response to your hunger, clicks into place for you, and you are truly able to eat in accordance with your body's biological hunger, then by waiting to

eat until you are hungry, you will be able to tune in and discover how satisfying your food can really be. As far as I'm concerned that's when food tastes most delicious, when you wait to build up an appetite making you good and hungry. It also reinforces to your brain the message that you are in control of your food. As this message gets repeated more often, it creates a new unconscious habit. You will notice that you will soon begin to develop a strong preference for eating only when you are hungry and it will become easier and easier to refuse food when you don't feel hungry.

Step #4: Eat intentionally and mindfully without guilt. Take back your sense of self by setting a new precedent. Eat what you want in full view of anyone and everyone. No more fear, no more guilt, no more feeling as though you are cheating. You're not. It's time to take back control of what you eat, and let the critics know that they have no right to comment on your body or what you eat, ever again. If you struggle with this, you can get some real nitty-gritty how to-s on setting these type of tough love boundaries in the chapter on Boundaries: When You Care Enough to Set the Very Best.

In many cases, it's really difficult to break away from the pack and announce your decision to stop dieting. Believe me, it's a real head turner in our diet obsessed society, but keep in mind, it's the kindest thing you can ever do for yourself to save yourself the time and aggravation and health consequences that comes with yo-yo dieting.

It's important to remember that people really don't give a flying fig what you eat, what they don't like is how your decision to not diet makes them feel. Women, especially can be so competitive when it comes to weight and food issues. Eating regular food in the midst of women dieting can be a real challenge. They feel threatened by you because you are reminding them that they can't 'cheat' on their diets. That reminds them that if they want to lose weight, they have to keep on eating like a rabbit. You are learning that is not true and in order for you to reverse your negative relationship with food, you have to start eating it again and getting to know it better. That means that you have no restrictions on what you eat. They do.

Remember their upset is not directed at you. It's not personal but they are freaking out over what's on your plate because they may want to grab the lamb chop on your plate and devour it in one gulp. As a result of their discomfort, they may try to guilt you back into getting on a diet so that they will have a partner in their misery to join the ranks of their Naked Salad Society. Just stick to your guns and say that you have chosen to stop dieting and this subject is not up for debate. Pretty soon the conversation will turn and no one will care what's on your plate. If, in the event this becomes more of an issue, you may need to consider that your lunch buddies are not supporting you. In that case, you have two options, demand that they be more respectful of your choices or find new lunch partners. In the case of mates, kids and lovers, they just need to be retrained. For more details on how to do that, see the Boundaries chapter.

Step #5: Feel Your Fullness. Listen to your body and become sensitive to the new sensation of a gentle feeling of satisfaction and fullness. You might like to pause in the middle of a meal and ask yourself how satisfying the food tastes to you and gauge your

level of comfort. My grandfather used to say, "just walk away from the table." Remember if you're hungry, you can always eat more.

Step #6: Rediscover the Satisfaction Factor in your food. When you eat what you want, in a pleasing environment, your satisfaction will be enhanced. As you gain more pleasure in food, you will naturally find that you eat smaller portions. Feast all your senses. Smell, taste, touch and fully enjoy your meals.

My Experience with Intuitive Eating: Freedom from Diet Prison

Many people learn the process of Intuitive Eating and pick it up easily and quickly without as much as a wing or a hitch, and then make the transition into normal eating, seamlessly without ever having a serious problem with food again. Fortunate for both of us, I wasn't one of the 'lucky' ones. Looking back in hindsight, I say that with all sincerity because I truly believe that although Intuitive Eating gave me the ability to get impossibly picky with food, I just wasn't able to stop eating once I started. Remember I mentioned how our runaway appetite can be a sign of unfulfilled needs? That was my case. In hindsight, I realize that I was filled with anger, and the anger was covering up extreme feelings of sadness. Rather than being comfortable dealing with those unpleasant emotions, I ate and tried my best to sit on my feelings.

I just feared my hunger too much, being vulnerable like that was too frightening so I kept eating to fill up the emptiness, consequently, I ate my way clear up to a 35 pound gain after nearly 6 years of successful maintenance on dieting. It was devastating to me to regain that weight back again and I searched desperately to answers to try to understand what was happening to me.

One of the people from whom I learned so much about myself and the roots of my eating obsession, was the best selling author and speaker, Geneen Roth. She is a woman with over 40 years of experience in learning how to make peace with food. In her book "Feeding the Hungry Heart: The Experience of Compulsive Eating" I think she really hits the mark in explaining why so many of us struggle with a subconscious resistance to losing weight, she says,

"Fat becomes your protection from anything you need protection from men, women, sexuality (blossoming or developed), frightening feelings of any sort; it becomes your rebellion, your way of telling your parents, your lovers, the society around you that you don't have to be who they want you to be. Fat becomes your way of talking. It says: I need help, go away, come closer, I can't, I won't, I'm angry, I'm sad. It becomes your vehicle for dealing with every problem you have."

If you take away the fat without uncovering the needs it is expressing, you are left without a way to say what you do, don't want to, or don't know how to, or feel you can't say directly. Fat speaks for you. That's why I couldn't stop eating. I didn't have any other way to express my needs and as long as I kept eating like a train wreck, my relationship with food and my body was a mess. I was pretty screwed up because although I was

going through the motions of earnestly trying to learn how to listen to my body, I sabotaged myself at every turn, by never allowing myself to feel hungry, so I kept eating and the pounds piled on.

Boy was the cocky dieter in me eating crow, but in hindsight, I recognize that I needed to regain the weight that I did in order to get back something that I had lost, my humility, my compassion for myself and other women struggling with emotional eating. I could never have served you if I would have been the way I was. I thought I had it all figured out and anyone who was overweight, just wasn't trying hard enough. Boy did this experience give me a reality check.

I guess you could say that I really chose to take the long road or as my Nana would say, "the slow boat to China." Like many of my clients, your changes may be much faster, and you may breeze along, but remember to go at your own pace and stay true to yourself. That's why this is not a diet. It's a new way of living and thinking.

Sure you could speed things up and lose a lot of weight if you follow the guidelines to the letter. Never eat when you're not hungry and never eat past the point of satisfaction, and eat like a turtle and chew your food a thousand times to let your brain get the message that it's full, but let's be real, life sometimes comes at you with a battering ram and if food is what makes you feel safe, then use what you know.

By teaching you other methods of dealing with stress, I'm extending a helping hand and showing you that you can choose other things besides eating to soothe yourself, but in all honesty, I don't always follow my own advice and feeling sorry for myself and at times eating half a bag of Swedish fish or too much pasta may win out over dealing with my problems, at least at first.

I've made a decision that I'm in no rush to get thinner. Sure I won't lie, a part of me would like/love to get my flat stomach back, but something inside of me says that I'm still not quite ready. In many ways writing this book has been like having a baby. It's given me a wonderful way of letting go of the painful parts of my past and still holding on to those remarkably rich and precious ones. I've learned to take the good with the bad and use what I can and toss the rest, not only with food, but with life. In the chapter, on Take 100% Responsibility in your life, I explain how without really stepping up and taking responsibility for your life, you could find yourself in an endless loop of food and binging. For the most part, as I continue to take more responsibility for the good, bad and ugly in my life, I've learned that I'm okay with or without my round tummy. After all, there's so much more to me than just my body.

I'm taking this at my own pace and I hope you will too. It's thrilling to me beyond belief that the daily obsession that food used to occupy in my every day life is gone and that I can feel safe knowing there's chocolate in the house or freshly baked pie on the counter. Knowing that I can toss out bits of leftovers and perfectly good food that I don't want, without feeling a sense of being deprived or feeling compelled to do something to make it inedible is a huge step for me.

I still have my share of lapses and goofs, but now I use those as an opportunity to go deeper and explore what I'm really after, because now I truly know it's not about the food. I have every confidence that eventually my new way of eating will yield a return and those extra pounds that I regained in learning how to do this, will slowly and gently continue to melt away. I feel strongly that it hinges on my willingness to get back into being more active, but I don't feel like committing to making that sacrifice now or maybe never.

I refuse to use exercise for weight loss ever again and will only do it when the mood strikes me. That defiant little girl in me, says, "No. I don't want to." Exercise is no longer that same burning priority that it was in my life. I'll get there but just like eating, I have to find my own way. Step by step, little by little, I like the changes I've made and nobody has pushed them on me. I like to think of my way of getting thinner as least invasive as possible. I've been through all the insanity and now I just want to take it easy.

For now I'm happy with myself as I am because it's deeply important to me to let my outsides catch up to my insides, and since I have a lot of stuff to still sort through, especially in the area of feeling safe with sex, I've decided that I'm willing to accept my curvy body as it is right now. It's so much nicer being able to actually like myself at a size 16/18 as opposed to hating myself as a size 8. This new sense of self acceptance has done wonders for my relationship with my husband which I'll share in the chapter on sex.

So please take my experience for what it's worth. It's just a benchmark, but it will give you an idea of how this all works. You've been living for a long time under the tyranny of dieting, and eating and thinking in this new gentle way is going to be a big change. I've decided to share my experience so that you won't be inclined to beat up on yourself if you notice that you're knee deep in wanting to eat ice cream for every meal for weeks or months on end. It's natural, just like a toddler goes on food jags and will only want to eat hot dogs or broccoli for a week and just when mom's about to pull the hair out of her head, and give up, the little one suddenly switches to crustless peanut butter sandwiches or boiled carrots. The changes you'll be making are yours, nobody else's. Nobody will tell you, "I think it's time to stop eating those french fries, don't you? Just one day you'll notice, "Mmm, I think I'll have a baked potato instead of fries. After all, they weren't so great, too greasy." Your body will regulate itself once it knows that all is safe and that there is no famine in your future.

It could definitely be argued that at first glance, this is a very unhealthy way of looking at food, but this is not a diet and the goal is not to lose weight. The goal is to create harmony and develop a new relationship with food. Eating less becomes a natural consequence of having a healthy relationship with food so most likely you will get thinner just eating in this way. You stack the odds in your favor by using all the other tools that I share with you through out this book. Just keep in mind this way of eating is healing the hurts in your history with food and your body.

You see, your problem is not with food. It doesn't really matter if you choose to eat ice cream or potato chips, chocolate cake or alfalfa sprout bean burritos, acorn squash or even boiled broccoli. You don't get brownie points for good behavior if you eat a bag of carrots when you're craving double buttered popcorn. It doesn't work like that. In order for you to learn to trust your body, you have to be willing to listen to it and really eat what you want. For all intents and purposes, to your body, all foods are equal, you can satisfy your hunger with a cheeseburger or a cracker. It's all just fuel. Naturally there are nutritional considerations, but you'll make those decisions in a way and in a time that feels organically right to you.

How Intuitive Eating Has Changed My Eating Habits

As you begin your journey along the road to non diet weight loss, you can expect to experience many changes. One of my Losing Weight Without Dieting graduates, Linda, says, "many of the foods that you thought you loved, you won't even like anymore. In fact, you'll hate them." Boy is she right!

The following is just a bird's eye view into my experience of how this process of Intuitive Eating has changed my own eating habits. You'll notice that the changes are gradual. This is not a get thin quick scheme. This is a way of reteaching your body how to eat to nourish itself. The changes are all internalized and come from body awareness, not anyone telling you what to do. You just begin doing it because it makes you feel good and overeating makes you feel rotten.

I began on August 2, 2006, that marked the first of many family vacations my husband and kids took visiting various members of our extended family. The first changes that I noticed were a sensitivity to the taste of salt. Many foods that I once loved no longer appeal to me after I gave myself permission to eat them. They tasted too salty. These include most fast food restaurants, like Burger King, McDonald's, Wendy's, Kentucky Fried Chicken and one of my former favorite craves...

Buttered Popcorn - Mid August - Movie buttered popcorn with extra butter. I remember a time when I first began eating exactly what I wanted. Angel, the kids and I went to see Pirates of the Caribbean with Janelle and Aiden. It was playing at the Air Force Base Movie theater. I purchased a double butter popcorn and made doubly sure that the gal behind the counter kept pouring the butter flavored oil on my popcorn. Preparing to sit down, I plucked a dripping golden soggy kernel from the top of the glazed fat laden heap, I tasted it and it sickened me. I haven't ordered my own buttered popcorn since. I've tasted it from others but most of the time I won't eat more than a few kernels, looking for the perfect ones. Usually I find them either too greasy or too salty.

I've gone through a number of phases with my eating. They include the following:

- * avocado and tomato sandwiches on toasted whole grain bread with light mayonnaise.
- * Cheetos, fried and baked
- * Cashews

- * Red meats
- * Chocolates of all kinds
- * Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on Arnold's white bread, on Martin's Whole grain bread
- * Ice cream, especially Ben and Jerry's Mint Oreo Cookie ice cream
- * Dunkin' Donuts
- * home made cookies
- * Hotdogs
- * Hamburgers
- * Sausages
- * Salami
- * Milk Duds
- * Jelly Beans
- * Dove Dark Chocolate Covered Almonds

* August/September - During the first couple of weeks, whenever I went out to eat, I would order a rare cheeseburger and an order of fries. At first, I would eat it all and feel overstuffed. After about 3 weeks of doing that, I noticed that the fries were often too soggy and the meat was undercooked. At one point, in the midst of Chocolate World, during a vacation in Hershey Park, Pennsylvania, the chocolate capital of the USA, I was desperate to order a plain piece of grilled chicken and steamed broccoli with mashed potatoes and a salad. That was a real head turning experience for me.

* August/September - Early on, I began carrying a chocolate bar in my pocketbook and whenever I wanted a bit of it, I would break off some and eat it. The novelty of that soon wore off and I noticed that the chocolate had been in my bag for about a month untouched. I tasted it and noticed it had gone rancid and threw it away, haven't replaced it since.

* HersheyPark - September - The next big change came when my family went to the chocolate capital of the USA with my mother. I was shocked to realize that the chocolate there tasted too sweet and after a small taste, I chose not to eat it. All the old turn ons that used to work for me, failed to excite me. The visual of the chocolate all over the place irritated me, the scent bugged me and I had absolutely no craving for it. It was as exciting to me as cardboard. Until later in the day, I purchased a large freshly baked chocolate chip cookie and very contentedly savored bits of it slowly as we rode home.

* September - I used to love to eat the skin and the fat on everything. One day while eating dinner with my family in the back yard, I used our grill to prepare a salmon steak just the way that I liked it. As I took my first bite of the perfectly grilled fish with its crispy skin, I nearly gagged on the flavor of the fat. The taste of the fat was so detestable that I spit it into a napkin and it was a long time before I ate the skin on salmon again, but it has never been quite as pleasant as it used to be. I keep trying it and hoping that it will be, but it's not. But for the most part, I still really love the fat on steak and pork chops, and wouldn't ever for the life of me consider removing the skin off my chicken. However now it's so nice

* October - This was when I really began to bring fattening foods into the house and to shop for whatever it was that I truly wanted, no fillers, no fat free foods, only foods that I really loved were good enough for my shopping cart. One of the first really scary foods that I experimented with was ice cream. Whenever I used to be on a diet, I would lust after ice cream. In the past, I felt that I had no control around it. In my dieting days, when I was being "good," I always settled for a lighter substitute but I always craved the rich creamy goodness of real ice cream. One of my most dangerous binge foods was always Ben and Jerry's Mint Oreo Cookie Ice Cream. I remember a time when I would just shovel it in and think nothing of it.

* Halloween - didn't touch a piece of candy until about two weeks after Halloween. Then one day at lunch, just before I presented one of my Losing Weight without Dieting programs, instead of eating a regular lunch, I decided that I wanted candy. I poured my daughter's entire bag of candy onto the kitchen table. I decided what I wanted, put it on a plate, closed my eyes, inhaled the scent of each piece and decided if I wanted to eat it. After doing that, I ate one Reeses' PB cup, one caramel, 1/2 bar of a Kit Kat and about 9 Dove chocolate covered almonds. I was so amazed that I shared my experience with the women in the program. That was at about 1:00. I didn't eat dinner that night until 9:30. All that I wanted that night was about a cup of rice, fresh cooked string beans sauteed in olive oil and garlic and a salad with croutons and Caesar dressing.

* October/November - I began to enjoy real dressing with my salad. One of my phases was to slather Caesar dressing on my salads. My husband Angel is a fantastic cook and he prepares amazing Spanish meals. One of my favorite things that he makes is called tostones, or fried plantains. I used to eat 8-10 of them, now I may eat 2. They're still just as good but I don't enjoy the taste of the grease the way that I used to, but I do love them when they are lacy. Angel also makes killer rice and beans and chicken wings to die for. I usually just eat the rice and beans and leave the meat I like to eat a bit more lightly now. I also enjoy a salad with avocado in it.

* October/November - After picking fresh apples from a local orchard, Cara and I decided to do some baking. My mother had just written a cookbook that included all the old family favorites and I wanted to try my great grandfather's recipe for apple pie. In perfecting his apple pie recipe, I baked it several times over the course of 2 months. Because it tasted too sweet, the first time I only took one bite and not a bit more. The second time I tried it with a different crust with oatmeal in the mix and found it too hard. Tasted a bite, thought it was terrible and ended up throwing it away. The third time I baked it. It was perfect with only 1/3 cup of sugar. I enjoyed a couple of slices over the next week, one at breakfast time with a dollop of strawberry ice cream and one after a small lunch.

* December 2006 - Christmas holidays with the family - I discovered that I can be surrounded by food and not want to binge on it. I pulled out all the stops for the holidays and prepared a ton of favorites that were formerly big temptations for me. In the past, I avoided preparing those foods since I felt that I had no control. I tested myself over the

holidays and prepared a Prime Rib, Baked Ham with Pineapple and Brown Sugar Glaze, baked macaroni and cheese, creamed spinach, fresh cookies, and tons of sweet loaves and muffins that I gave to friends as Christmas gifts.

As with everything that I do, I went full out in learning this process. To test the effectiveness of it for both myself and my clients, I decided to keep it as pristine as possible, so I discontinued any workouts and did not use my Craving Zapping tools or any other energy coaching strategies to deal with any cravings or wayward emotions. I just ate my way through the first few months, running wild. That caused me to gain about 10 pounds during this process. I ate everything I wanted all the time with no regard to paying attention to how hungry I was. I thought that every impulse that my body had, indicated hunger so I ate. Even if the space between meals was 1 hour.

At one point, during this process I noticed my eating habits had really taken a turn and become a lot more organically healthy and cleaner. I was actually choosing to eat brown rice and broccoli and lots of fruit and veggies. Around the same time I was experiencing pain in my back and went to see a local Acupuncturist. I loved the treatments and found them so relaxing, I often fell asleep. However the practitioner pointed out that the source of my challenges with my back was an excess of humidity that came from certain foods that I was eating, those of the white flour, starch and sugar laden variety.

Although I had almost nearly given them up entirely, hearing him tell me to avoid those foods instigated my inner rebel in earth shoes and muumuus and that led to many months of out of control binging on those very foods that I had previously decided that I didn't like. So my desire to eat the Swedish fish, white rice, potatoes and pasta all returned with a vengeance.

During that time I also made the grave mistake of getting on the scale and that only added fuel to the fire. Until I had that Aha that came from the day listening to the speaker in the graduation assembly, I didn't put two and two together and realize that my out of control eating was a result of resistance. Now I know of the signs when that happens to me. You'll also learn how to read your body. We're all different. But one thing I know for certain is that this process will bring you as close as possible to learning how to treat yourself gently, and nurture your inner child like she's never been loved before.

Many people who recover from eating addictions, use this process without any added tools like energy coaching or NLP. It takes time and often they gain weight but it is a temporary gain. Eventually the body resets itself to begin the process of losing weight naturally.

When I began to prepare to do my first Losing Weight Without Dieting Program, I wanted to test out many of my energy coaching tools to question my phantom hungers and to teach the women how they could use them to do the same.

On a personal note, I would have to say that I wouldn't have traded that initial period when I went crazy for anything in the world. To me, it was invaluable and it taught me that I have ultimate control, no one else.

Today I give my clients a choice and tell them that they can do what I did and risk gaining weight in the first few months or begin to question their hunger from the start and have different results. I've taught that process to several other women in my Losing Weight Without Dieting Program and they have been able to lose weight at the onset, unlike me.

By integrating the energy coaching tools, you will disconnect the emotions that drive you to overeat and balance your body so much more quickly than I ever did. I'm glad that I did not use that crutch in the beginning. On some level, I decided that I wanted this experience to teach me that I could live with food for a lifetime, not just look at non dieting as just another diet. It's not. I've also found that touching base and getting to the root of emotional issues is paramount to addressing the feelings of guilt and hunger. I no longer feel any sense of deprivation around not eating a certain food if it doesn't pass muster.

Here we are a new year and a new outlook later, two years further along. Each day brings a new revelation for me. I have mentally discarded my bathroom scale and stopped judging myself. I know that if I do affirmation and more visualization seeing myself as thinner, it will happen faster, but to tell the truth I don't want to continue to use visualization to see myself as thinner. I use it all the time for other things, but to get thinner, that doesn't do it for me anymore. As I said, I really want my outsides to catch up with my insides. I know the pain of experiencing weight gain after investing so much time and energy to lose weight and I won't let that happen again, so as I've said before, I'm in no rush to beat myself back down to a size 8. If/when I get back there, I'll be a very different person than I am now, so I'm just going to focus on loving this body I have right now and continuously pushing myself to achieve more in my career, stretch myself and be more present with my family, spend more time with my friends, be more intimate with my husband and just enjoy my life more.

I rather use the precious tool of visualization to see myself doing things that challenge me, gaining more confidence and doing more things that I love with the people I love. Because then I know that I'll continue to balance and harmonize my relationship with food and getting thinner will only continue to be a positive benefit of that.

I've noticed that without doing daily visualization seeing myself as slimmer, my body is nonetheless slowly beginning to reshape itself back to the way that it used to be. My waist is beginning to nip in a bit more and my thighs are getting a bit smaller. It's a slow process and I refuse to push it.

I've learned from every time that I've eaten more than I wanted. As I learn new things, I share them with my clients. I've finally decided that I'm in no rush to lose these extra 30 or 40 or so pounds. I'm just lovin' my ability to listen to my body and to honor my

hunger. I feel as free as a bird being able to order foods that I've always wanted and choose what appeals to me and leave the rest or take it for later. Food no longer holds a spell over me. I've begun cooking and baking again. I've prepared all my favorites and the idea of tasting the food is not even a temptation anymore.

Personally, now I like to wait until I get really hungry before any meal. I've chosen to miss many meals because I have not felt hungry. That in and of itself is a major coup. The old Andrea, would never, ever have missed a meal. Not ever!

I spent about a year learning more about the process of eating in recovery through a wonderful support forum called Diet Survivors. From that message board, I met many wonderful people who have used this process much longer than I have. I have met the moderator of the board, Linda Moran. I thanked her for offering this amazing service and offered my support as a co-moderator. She accepted my offer and for several months I was one of the moderators of this truly excellent non diet resource board.

Once in awhile, I still struggle a bit with quantity, especially at the dinner meal. I've learned that I just like to eat more at dinner, so to offset that, I eat a much smaller lunch. I love homemade soups, sweet potatoes, or a good baked potato. After a short dalliance with luncheon meats, basically I found them all too salty for my liking and prefer to eat the real deal, roasted chicken, Angel's famous Spanish style turkey or my pineapple brown sugar-mustard glazed ham. I absolutely love to cook and leftovers are always a special treat.

If I do happen to crave something late in the evening, I'll check in with my stomach and very rarely will anything heavy like ice cream or cake pass muster, but I will enjoy having a piece of Milton's Whole Grain toast or 1/2 a Thomas' Raisin English muffin as a snack with margarine or, a slice of cheese, strawberry jam or pecan apple butter. I love to have that with a cup of peppermint tea in the evening. Gone are the snack attack crazed nightly binges of ice cream and all the other fat laden foods like my favorite Little Debbie Nutty Bars. However I do prefer to eat some of these foods in moderation during the day if I eat them at all. Lately I'm really digging those Nutty Bars again. Remember just like a young child, you'll find yourself going on and off those food jags.

On the whole, I don't think about food anymore when I'm not hungry and now when I get really upset, I realize that what I really need is to take a nap. That often works like magic and functions as my reset switch, while at the same time revitalizing my body and calming my nerves more than any binge ever did.

I've really come back full circle and find myself craving all my old beloved fruits and veggies. When I was a dieter, I used to have no trouble eating all the recommended daily servings, but never felt comfortable using butter, or olive oil or using any other way of adding flavor to vegetables besides using ketchup or mustard. Heaven forbid, I can't believe that back in my dieting days, I used to try to convince my son, PT to eat steamed string beans and serve them with ketchup and told him to think of them as French fries. No wonder sometimes he acts like he hates me. Maybe it's those raging teenage

hormones. Who knows! I used to be the ultimate diet drill sergeant, just like my father was with me. That will probably give my poor son a few good years on the therapist's couch.

For the most part, now I use margarine and olive oil and enjoy it tremendously. Now I realize that I don't eat a fraction of the amount of what I used to consume because now my food, whatever it is really satisfies me. I use olive oil liberally and eat more of the good fats and salads, vegetables and legumes all the time, which keeps me happy for many hours. I still like a piece of steak or a burger once in a while, but I prefer to have chicken, lobster, shrimp, scallops or go meatless. I've found true freedom in this way of eating. Now this is something that I can do for a lifetime with no problem. Goodbye diets! How about you?

The Later Lady

I'll just bet that you're thinking that without the structure and clearly defined boundaries of dieting, it seems impossible to listen to your body, eat in accordance with your hunger and slowly reshape your body eating foods you love. You probably also believe that within you lies a wretched feast beast, a bottomless pit of hunger and desire, making it impossible for you to control yourself around food. Trapped by your own weakness, you become a victim of the voices. Maybe the Later Lady inside of you says "we'll listen to our body tomorrow."

Follow along with me and I'll teach you the importance of decoding your cravings, identifying what's bothering you and looking beyond the obvious to really understand what's behind your desire to eat. I'll also explain how your emotions are actually living vibrations that function like an internal guidance system that can actually be used to help you achieve your goals. You'll also learn a delicious toe curling process called The Body/Mind Wisdom Model. It was created by John Felitto who is a Master Coach and Trainer for The Silva Mind Method. This is one of my favorite go-to processes when I really need to pick myself back up and find my way back home again. It will enable you to slow down and benefit from what you may now consider to be "negative" emotions

When Is Being Hungry Not Really Being Hungry?

If you're an emotional eater, then you have a little voice in your brain that's pushing you to eat food when you're not hungry. The Later Lady is a character, Jo Anne one of my clients used to walk around with inside of her head. In her case, her Later Lady pushed her to eat when she wasn't hungry. This was the name that she gave her desire to fill up on food when she wasn't hungry. Her Later Lady kept her picking or grazing on food all day long, eating pasta until she felt sick or running to the safety of red velvet cake when things got tough.

I had another name for this Later Lady. I used to call it "my bottomless pit." By whatever name, you choose to recognize your desperate urge to overeat, the effects are the same. It leaves you feeling weak and helpless. This is because the Later Lady voice in your brain

is always screaming, urging, egging you on to eat that cupcake, dive into the open bag of Cheetos, have an extra helping at dinner or supersize it at the drive thru.

See if you can recognize some of these Later Lady/bottomless pit statements.

- “Don’t worry, honey, you go ahead and have that piece of cake today and we’ll start dieting tomorrow.”
- “Let’s stop at the drive thru and get a burger, it smells so good
- “I think a donut would be the perfect reward for that great job that you did.”
- “Just one more piece of cake.
- “You know you can’t be trusted around an open bag of potato chips.” Have one.

Comment [AA11]: Karen, I’d like to separate these statements and put them on an individual sheet so that they will stand out. AA - What do you mean again by this? - KL

The primary difference between emotional eaters and naturally slender women who are able to eat in response to their body’s biological hunger, is the emotional eaters are unfulfilled in their lives and have been conditioned to use food to fulfill the needs they are lacking. I’ve learned from Connirae Andreas, the creator of the Naturally Slender Eating Strategy that naturally slender women are able to pinpoint what is lacking in their life and fill that need without resorting to overeating. They focus on paying attention to how they feel so they can express their feelings, putting their energy into being creative and going for what they want in life by doing things they love.

Decoding Your Cravings

We often crave food for purely physical reasons such as craving spinach or liver when your body is lacking iron, fish when you need iodine or protein, or wanting to eat citrus when your body is low on Vitamin C. However cravings can have both physical and emotional causes. When you crave foods to satisfy emotional needs, this is just as valid as craving foods for purely physical needs.

When you crave a food and you satisfy that craving, it is healing, triggering a chemical reaction in your body that produces a sense of wellbeing. The rush of feel-good chemicals flooding your brain, sends signals down to the body to relax and feel good. This feel-good sensation fulfills a deep need that sources back to a need to feel safe and satisfied. It’s part of your basic survival instinct.

One of the foods you may recognize as making you feel good is chocolate. Many people have cravings for chocolate. Eating chocolate satisfies a craving for both emotional and often physical needs. In my opinion, chocolate has gotten a bad reputation.

Chocolate Has Gotten a Bad Rap!

If you believe dessert and sweets can only be eaten after you’ve finished your main meal, you’re setting yourself up to overeat. Dessert as a reward is probably responsible for more kids and adults getting fat than any other eating rule. Having sweets on an already full stomach, prevents you from fully enjoying the food you really want, which will keep you in a cycle of obsessing about it and overeating it every time you get the chance.

You may not want to eat a full meal, and may instead choose to just eat chocolate or some other dessert-like food. By doing this, you will reclaim your power over that food. Only you will know when you want to choose a piece of fruit over a cookie, and I've learned it's best for this to become a natural and very organic transition. However for now, in order for you to arrive at that place of safety, you'll want to explore the foods that have long been considered forbidden. As you progress along and discover you can trust your body, you will eventually start craving foods that are considered good for you, much like my experience with craving brown rice and other healthy foods before my inner rebel bumped heads with my very well meaning acupuncturist.

I encourage you to get a compelling experience of the flavor of the food you crave. If that food is chocolate, then I would ask you to make it the main event for at least one meal. It will be an experience like no other. You may want to choose to do this at lunchtime or a time when you have some privacy. This is because it will require really focusing on the pleasure of eating chocolate in the moment. Savoring chocolate mindfully is a very different experience than grabbing it out of the kitchen cabinet when someone's back is turned.

This is a great opportunity to apply my Mindful and Gentle Eating Process to your chocolate meal. If you'd like to skip ahead, you can find it on pages 38-41 of this chapter.

Eat What You Really Want

I find that in the beginning as you learn to make peace with food, it's so important to be able to truly know that you can eat for pleasure. It's only in America that we think of chocolate as junk food, in other countries it's thought of in a much higher regard. It's even considered as a meal, being spread over toast or crackers, as in Nutella, the delicious milk chocolate flavored hazelnut spread. I'm not saying that it's the perfect food, but nothing is, as a stand alone. Today for a unique taste sensation, I took a brazil nut from a can of mixed nuts and dipped it into a jar of nutella. Very nice taste, but just one did the trick.

My recommendation is to treat chocolate and any other sweet craving as a regular food. I suggest doing this so your body can get the message that nothing is off limits and it's okay to eat anything you want. By extending that permission, your desire for chocolate will dissolve and neutralize and that's when you'll notice that you can truly just eat one and be as happy as a clam.

In the beginning when I started to learn how to eat intuitively, I ate all kinds of chocolate for, before, during and after meals. But I ate so much of it that it made me feel sick. My cabinets were overflowing with every kind of chocolate or bar imaginable, especially those I couldn't imagine eating when I was on a diet, Godiva chocolates, Reese's peanut butter cups, Twix bars, Dove dark chocolate covered almonds, Snickers bars, milk duds and so many other goodies.

It was during that time that I thought I loved chocolate and soon reached the hasty conclusion that it didn't love me back. At one point, I was convinced that I couldn't eat dairy foods because they upset my stomach.

Then I started modulating how I ate them and that changed the way that I related to them. After I started using EFT to decode what was really behind my desire to eat chocolate to the point of excess, I started to realize that I don't really love it at all. I only really love dark chocolate and only small bits of it.

I am convinced that the reason that my desire for chocolate has lessened and my physical issues with it have disappeared is because I know I have it in my cabinets or anywhere accessible to me at any time so it's no longer something I think about. I take it for granted.

Try It: Welcoming the Forbidden

Comment [AA12]: Karen, let's box this the same as the other Try Its

What's your forbidden fruit of desire? What food gets you in a twist? In your notebook, write a letter to that food and notice what feelings come up as you share your thoughts it.

For example:

Dear chocolate, I love you and I hate you. I can't stand the fact that I need to eat you every day. I feel so helpless each time I'm around a box of Godivas. I only wish that...

Please know that I don't encourage you to eat chocolate all the time. Although it has some nutritional value, it doesn't make up a full day's eating requirement necessary for good nutrition. Although I don't advocate making a steady diet of chocolate or other sweets, I do want you to reclaim your power over those foods so that you can truly realize that it is you who is in control and not the candy, cake, pies or any other goodies that may now be calling your name. Remember as Sheryl Underwood says in her role as Catfish Rita in the movie Beauty Shop, "Honey, I got me some hips, thighs and don't discriminate against pies."

Comment [AA13]: Karen, do you recommend that I include some type of disclaimer label for both of these next paragraphs?

Try It! – Giving Yourself Permission

Comment [AA14]: Karen, let's box this up too!

In this activity, I encourage you to write a sentence or two responding to the following questions:

- 1) How entitled do you feel about having chocolate when you want it?
- 2) Does that idea make you feel safe or bring up some fears?
- 3) What are those fears?

Next take a tip from Geneen Roth and consider carrying around a bar of chocolate in your bag to have close to you. It's so nice to know that it's there when you want it.

Juicy Woman Note:

If you notice that you're feeling anxious around the idea of either having chocolate or any other goodies in the house accessible to you, then you may want to refer back to the EFT portion of the book and there you will find several scripts that will help to lessen those emotions and neutralize those fearful feelings.

Please know that it's best to move at your own pace. If your forbidden desire is full fat yogurt and you only eat the nonfat variety, eek it up a bit and buy the low fat variety, rather than the higher fat type. Do what feels right to you. Pace yourself.

A Closer Look At Common Food Cravings

Here is a list of common cravings and foods.

Breads, pastas, starches – These are soul satisfying, body filling foods. When you eat these types of foods, you'll notice that you feel fully satisfied, sturdy and full. It gives you a sense of being grounded and stable like you won't easily be tipped over.

Crunchy foods like chips, pretzels, crackers and snack foods – When you eat these foods, you're satisfying a need to crunch down and use your teeth to grind the food. There's an aspect of frustration or releasing anxiety that is related to eating these types of munchies.

Bones – chewing, gnawing and chomping down on bones is very satisfying, especially if you're angry or anxious.

Smooth, creamy foods - These foods are ice cream, puddings, cereals. Foods you can gum and swallow without having to chew. These represent the desire to be taken care of and to be nurtured.

Salty foods – soups, stews, broths. Chicken soup has been recognized by the AMA as having medicinal properties. Foods like these are best for soothing hurts.

Chocolate – often represents a desire to feel loved and to increase sweetness in your life

Spicy foods – cravings for these foods reflect a desire to increase excitement and to add spice to your life.

Exploring the Different Types of Hunger

You may think you know why you want to eat every time you go to the supermarket, watch television, pass a drive thru, read a magazine, or see other people eating. But there are several types of hunger that drive you to want to eat when you're not physically hungry. Let's explore these non physical based hungers further so that you can learn to recognize them.

Comment [AA15]: Karen, let's box this one too

Comment [AA16]: Karen, please box this too or let me know what you recommend boxing and what you want to highlight in another way.

Taste or Mouth Hunger – Sometimes people eat because they see food or the occasion calls for it. Eating buttered popcorn in the movies is a good example of this or enjoying a slice of cake to celebrate someone’s birthday also qualifies. Naturally slender eaters often succumb to this type of hunger and think nothing of it, never even giving it a second thought. Unlike dieters, they do not consider this a food violation or infraction and merely enjoy the experience, paying particular attention to their hunger going forward, especially if they overindulge and eat more than they want.

Although you may have recently eaten and your stomach may be empty, your body desires the texture and taste, and sensation that you get from the food you are craving. Your body is crying out for you, begging you to eat and get pleasure from food by putting it in your mouth, even though you’re not hungry. This is because your memories of tasting the food, chewing it and feeling it in your mouth are so intense and pleasurable you feel almost compelled to eat whatever food you see.

Many times we are derailed into thinking we are hungry, when in fact we might just be thirsty. This is a good time to drink a glass of water and see if the hunger sensation passes or if the intensity levels off.

True Hunger - Is a much slower, more gradual build up of sensations that signal the body’s reserves are running low and this causes you to feel physically hungry.

Comment [AA17]: Andrea, add to this when you find the true hunger info. It’s probably on the blog.

Practical Hunger – Although it’s most important and extremely fulfilling to wait to eat until you are hungry, oftentimes we do have to adjust our meal times to fit a schedule.

If you are attending an event that will run several hours, and there is no access to food, you may want to enjoy a light snack to avoid getting hit with hunger pains with food nowhere in sight. This is considered planning ahead and it’s often a sensible solution.

Emotional Hunger – This is the type of hunger we explored when I discussed food cravings. You have different responses to foods based on what your emotional needs are. You may use it to celebrate or pacify, soothe or uplift. By any other name, it’s still satisfying an emotional need. This type of hunger hits you with the force of a truck, making it almost impossible to deny the craving. Use this wonderful opportunity to explore how to use EFT to get beneath those cravings and see what needs really are going unmet in your life.

Interestingly, this hunger is aggravated by depriving yourself of the foods you crave. It’s best to go out and get those foods or prepare them and keep them around so when you feel physical hunger, you can eat them and enjoy knowing that you can have them. This takes the edge off of your fear and worry about not being able to eat the food. Eventually you’ll know that you have total freedom to choose what you eat and when you eat it, that the quality of your choices will begin to modulate based on what makes your body feel best over time. Eventually, although you may be able to eat a double scoop of chocolate ice cream with nuts and caramel sauce and gobs of whipped cream, you may actually choose something else that may leave you feeling lighter and more energetic.

All too often we're a victim of our own habits, those knee jerk reactions and conditioned responses to things that have happened in our lives long ago. As long as we continue to act on impulse, we will not be able to take responsibility and take steps to create our own happiness. In order to do that, we've got to slow down to become more aware of what's going on in our lives.

Embracing the moment is so important, yet we rarely are present in our lives. You may be constantly rushing from one place to another, find yourself eating on the run, putting out fires everywhere in your life, and living in chaos and confusion. Your response to the frenetic energy in your life keeps you in patterns of overeating.

In the upcoming chapter, Taking 100% Responsibility in your life, I'll teach you how to change the way that you respond to the immovable forces in your life. This will become second nature to you as you begin to cultivate your own sense of inner awareness.

Maybe right now, you're feeling a bit numbed and thinking you have no right to be happy because of your addiction to food. You think because you are fat, or can't control yourself around a bag of potato chips, something is morally wrong with you. Having the belief that you're a second class citizen by virtue of your clothing size, has probably been holding you back from pursuing the passion that burns in your soul. It sure had that effect on me as you'll see in the following story.

Nine Bags of Chips: A Cry for Independence

I'm now forty-six years old and I've struggled with my own eating addiction for over thirty-four years. As of today, I've been doing intuitive eating for almost two years. Through doing this, I've discovered my freedom.

I have moved way beyond knowing I can trust myself around an open bag of M&Ms or a bag of chips, or even a fresh baked batch of chocolate chip cookies, brownies or cake. I now know my favorite ice cream can actually develop freezer fuzz, while standing for weeks uneaten in the freezer in my home.

In the early part of this process, I ate chips compulsively. At one time, I had nine bags of chips in my cabinet, Doritos, Fritos, Lays Potato Chips, Taco chips, Baked Cheetos, Fried Cheetos, Cheese Twists, Garden of Eatin' Blue corn chips and Pita chips. I ate all of them constantly, each time I passed the kitchen. I grabbed another, handful, completely disregarding my hunger. As time passed, I just ate them occasionally with a sandwich.

Over time, I discriminated more. A single taste would tell me, it was too salty, or too cheesy, stale, the wrong size or shape, too thin or too thick, too twisted or too flat, too greasy, too, too, too. For months after I knew I no longer liked them, I kept them in the cabinet and did a quick mental count each time I opened the door. Nine. I had nine bags

of chips in the house that I could eat anytime I wanted to. I looked at them all arranged standing like soldiers, on my bottom shelf. Nine. Andrea had nine bags of chips.

Thumbing my nose at the memory of my well meaning dad and step mother, Rosie, who only did stupid things like telling me that they counted all the potato chips in the house and made me eat broccoli with lemon for lunch and cut the fat off my steak was only because they wanted to help me to lose weight. They put me on my first diet. Those 9 bags of chips were a shout out against them. They were my cry for independence.

In 1973, when I moved in with Dad and Rosie, it was only about three months after my mother and step father had gotten married and moved to Florida. Over that short time, I gained a lot of weight. Dr. Zucker put me on a 1000 calorie a day diet. I had gained thirty pounds in three months. No one but me knew why.

Chips were among the first things to go, yet because Rosie was slim and dad loved junk food, the foods I grew to love were always in the house, but I couldn't have them, so close and yet so far. And boy did I want them. But I wangled my way around that. Whenever Rosie would go downstairs to do a laundry and leave me in the house alone, I raided the cabinets and refrigerator and shoved handfuls of tempting goodies, M&Ms, cookies, donuts, bagels, cold leftovers in my mouth, just waiting to hear the outside elevator door close and listening for the key in the lock.

One day, Rosie came back from the basement after folding the clothes and called me into the kitchen. She had a strange look on her face. It was the serious one that intimidated me.

I had just moved in with her and dad a few months before, leaving behind Florida, my manic mom, who is and will always be very lovable, yet weak, still choosing to live like an ostrich with her head in the sand with my alcoholic and perverted step father who sexually abused me for years.

I searched Rosie's eyes for clues as to what she was thinking. Her big brown, warm loveable cow eyes told me something was brewing but I couldn't tell what it was. I knew I was in some kind of trouble.

Breaking the tense silence, she said, "Andrea, did you eat any of the potato chips?"

"No, I said. I would never."

Then she asked me again with her voice a little firmer this time. "Andrea, did you eat any of the potato chips?"

"No, I said, my voice cracking a little bit."

Then she asked again, "Andrea, tell me the truth. Did you eat any of the potato chips?"

I swore up and down that I didn't.

Then she said, "Andrea, I counted them."

I broke into sobs and confessed my guilty sin. At which point, she laughed and told me, "Silly how am I going to count potato chips?"

Stung by my own innocence, heaped on top of the buckets of shame that I felt, I now felt stupid. That was the reason why those nine bags stayed in my house for several months even after I knew I didn't like them anymore and they were too salty or greasy.

Now knowing that I'm not a human garbage can, indiscriminately devouring everything in my path, I am now finally finding out for the first time who this Andrea really is.

What's Your Waterloo?

For me, it was chips, for you it may be cookies, Grandma's blueberry pie, Mom's Sunday lasagna or some other food you feel you'll never get enough of. If you're depriving yourself of it and trying to avoid it, that food is the one that is holding your happiness hostage. As long as you keep your distance from it, you'll never know who's really in control. As a result, you'll fall back on believing what other people have told you about yourself in relation to food.

You'll recall I've mentioned food has been the only way your body has known how to take care of itself. This has become your only means of survival in the absence of not knowing other ways to cope with stress besides eating.

As an emotional eater, you've developed preferences for food giving you the ability to cope with your stress. As I described earlier, my client Ayla had mentioned when she was in need of comfort, bread was her go-to, when she wanted excitement in life, she would have ice cream, cake was for celebrating. Each type of food represented her way of engaging in life.

Like me and so many other women, she was also sexually abused, so food became her safe way of expressing her emotions. Food became a world within her world giving her safety and refuge from the fear she faced in living day to day, feeling so empty, and haunted by her memories of the past. When she joined my Losing Weight without Dieting program, she had no idea how much food had controlled her life. She has since lost over sixty pounds by becoming more mindful of her choices. She credits the EFT work that I did with her in group one day as being the tipping point that led her to believe she was holding onto the belief that she had nothing to live for but food.

When I led her to do some EFT, I remember saying, Even though I have nothing else in my life but food to love and care for me, I deeply and completely love and accept myself. Even though I can't trust anyone else in my life besides food—it will never let me down—I love and accept myself anyway. Even though up until now, food has been so

meaningful in my life, it's filled up all the emptiness and made the sadness go away, I can choose to take care of myself, I can eat what I want, when I want, not worry about dieting, I can choose to eat or not. It's always my choice. Throughout the tapping, she sobbed quietly. I knew a lot of energy was moving in her body.

Immediately after that tapping she looked around at her life and realized the beliefs that kept her running to food, were the result of old thinking and feeling so unsafe. She realized she now had an adoring husband, friends who supported and loved her, and a career that made her heart sing. From that point of understanding, she said it was easy to make choices that honored her. She is still amazed to this day how she was able to go on an Anniversary cruise with her husband, eat everything she wanted and return from vacation weighing two pounds less.

Before she had the realization of how wonderful her life really was, eating had been her way of filling her emptiness. It was like a gaping hole that lived inside of her filled with a black, angry void, aching to be filled. Yet one of the constants for her was that she rarely gave herself time to enjoy whatever she was eating. As much as Ayla professed to love food, she rarely got a chance to really taste it.

One day she came to class and said, I walked past my sink and found a plate of empty sandwich crumbs and couldn't remember eating the sandwich." As emotional eaters, we rarely are focused on the taste of the food. That's only a peripheral enjoyment. The real trophy is how the food makes us feel. That's what keeps us going back for more, not the taste, but how it makes you feel inside. One day I had a really eye opening experience that made it so clear how food and feelings were connected. Here you can read about the message in my apple sauce.

The Message in My Applesauce: The Value of Slowing Down and Tasting Your Food

One day I woke up early in the morning, around 5:00 a.m., actually feeling very hungry, or so I thought. For the past several months, I had gotten into a comfortable pattern where I didn't feel hungry or want to eat breakfast until about 11:30. Back in the days when I was dieting, that was absolutely unheard of, I was always starving as soon as I woke up. Now, especially if I'm busy I can go for hours without the first glimmer of hunger.

But today seemed different. I was hungry so I went downstairs to the kitchen and chose some Mott's Cinnamon Applesauce from the refrigerator and spooned a few tablespoons into a small dish. Feeling a bit pressured to get my day started and finally finish the editing on my book; without even tasting the applesauce, I ate the first bite very quickly with a kind of desperation. Then I noticed that I was really anxious and felt very pressured to finish the book. Separating myself from that urgency for a moment, I wondered what would happen if I ate the next bite more slowly. I noticed that my thoughts instantly changed their quality and began to slow down as I began to more consciously and slowly savor the taste of the applesauce from the spoon. I noticed it was more tart than I would have liked.

As I sat there in a bit of daze, I asked myself, “Why do I want this now? It’s not even that good. It’s been so long that I’ve had an early breakfast, why now and what does this applesauce remind me of?”

Then it hit me as I looked into the dish and saw the applesauce, it was almost as though I was being transported back in time to my Nana’s kitchen long ago, sitting at the sparkling white kitchen table, looking at all the apples we had picked together strewn all over, counter top as I enjoyed the wafting scent and the delightful aromas of the cinnamon and apples gently simmering on the stove top for fresh pies and apple sauce for the upcoming church bazaar.

I went a bit deeper into the memory and could see the patterned wall paper adorning the kitchen walls and feel the cool, hard flooring under my feet. I could even visualize sitting in my favorite chair looking across the small kitchen out the window at the magnificent view of the Hudson River and the majestic New York City skyline. I watched the cars rolling over the George Washington Bridge. I could even see my Nana, all smiles, as she stood at the stove in her frilly apron peeling and dicing the apples with her deft fingers moving so quickly. I could even make out the details of her wedding ring.

Caught in my reverie, I had one more spoonful of applesauce and realized that I no longer wanted it. I took the rest and put it away for later. I knew that the applesauce had already done its job. It brought me back to a place where I remembered feeling such love and warmth and being happy. There’s absolutely no denying it. I adored my Nana and still continue to love her beyond this physical plane.

Here’s the takeaway from this story. Different foods have different associations in your brain. This is why you get cravings for certain foods. You are actually craving the emotion that the food holds from the memories that are connected to the food. If you are an emotional eater, food has more meanings and connections for you than people who don’t feel so attached to eating.

When you take an extra moment and linger over the food and ask yourself what it reminds you of, you are putting yourself in a position of being an observer. It’s like being able to unzip your skin and step out of your body and watch yourself from a distance. When you can do that, you are able to notice more things because your vision is not clouded by emotion. You are no longer unconscious of what you are doing. It is when we are unaware of what we are eating that we eat more because we don’t experience the satisfaction that comes from the enjoyment of the food. So let’s be clear, from this point onward when I talk about getting satisfaction from food, I’m talking way beyond what you can taste. I’m more interested in you getting to the goods of what you can feel. Because when you do that, many times you’ll be able to recognize foods that are actually quite mediocre tasting that have made you feel out of control and enslaved by those cravings, unable to feel like you can ever get enough of them. Now perhaps you may choose to eat those foods that don’t taste as delicious as you may want them to, but one bite or one cookie or one muffin, or one of whatever it is will satisfy you in the same way that it used to take a dozen or more. When you extract the feeling from the food, the food

just become food again. In some ways that's really great and in some ways it's also very sad, but true. Just like in the movie, Cinderella, when the clock struck 12, everything changed. That's what will most likely happen for you.

Don't get me wrong, you can still completely override that awareness and go back to unconscious eating again and choose to overeat those foods, but it now becomes a choice, rather than a must. You will learn that you can indeed control yourself, but you may not always want to and that's fine, because it's essential that you always go at your own pace.

What do you think of slowing down and noticing what you are reminded of today when you eat your food. Who knows, like me, it may change the flavor completely and you may need to just sit in silence for a few minutes and really let those memories seep into your soul and enjoy knowing that they will live in your heart forever. Remember it's not the food you're seeking, it's the feeling. Go for the feelings. Notice what you are feeling. Amazing things will come of it. Now without further ado, let me share with you a process that I created in the first few weeks of trying to figure this all out for myself. It's called Mindful and Gentle Eating.

Interrupt the Pattern Of Emotional Eating

By using The Mindful and Gentle Eating Exercise, you will be able to regain control over your conscious awareness of the food you eat. However, in order to fully overcome emotional eating, it is essential that you find resourceful ways of dealing with the often uncomfortable emotions that drive you to eat. It is also important to be able to neutralize emotions that trigger the desire to overeat.

Comment [KL19]: There was a lot of repetitive material here. We may need to smooth the transition now.

I've created this exercise for my Say Goodbye to Dieting Program, formerly known as Losing Weight without Dieting. I recommend that you use this Mindful and Gentle Eating Exercise to become more conscious of your eating, slow yourself down and refocus on how the food makes you feel and notice how it feels in your body in the moment and over time.

The following is an exercise to give you the opportunity to begin to reawaken your sense of how to eat more mindfully, in full conscious awareness of your thoughts and feelings as you eat. If you're inclined to be a fast eater like me, I know how hard it is for you to consider eating more slowly. Eating fast is a sign of compulsion, that stems from fear of lack. Many non diet weight loss programs only advocate eating slowly as a means of breaking the habit of compulsion that drives the speed eating. I don't agree with that. As a gal who has always eaten very fast, I resented it when anyone told me to eat slowly. The resistance you feel is that little survival part of you that refuses to be made to feel unsafe ever again. I promise I won't ever take anything away from you. My only desire is to add to what you already have. I encourage you to learn by giving you the opportunity to enjoy contrast. I believe that choices are essential to being happy and in order to create new habits effortlessly, you have to feel really good about what you choose. You'll notice in this exercise, I'll ask you to eat slowly and then I'll encourage you to eat at your normal pace, whatever that may be and then alternate between the two speeds. That is

done so that your brain can reorganize itself and find an intermediate speed that will become a new comfort level for you. Now if you're ready, let's begin:

Exercise: Mindful and Gentle Eating

You may choose to eat anything that you want. The choice is up to you. This exercise is done to consciously slow you down. You may find it a challenge at first, later it will become a great joy.

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- A. Find five emotional food connections in your life that have in the past compelled you to eat when you were not hungry.
- B. What has that food meant to you?
- C. What memories rise to the surface when you think about it?
- D. Go out and get that food and bring it home or prepare it.

Before you are ready to sit down and eat your chosen food, set your place with the appropriate silverware and a napkin (even if you are eating a pint of ice cream, make sure that you have a napkin) You don't have to serve it in a bowl unless you choose to do so.

1. Bring your journal to the table
2. Have your silverware and optional plate or bowl ready along with your napkin
3. Place the food on the table
4. Sit down facing it
5. Look at it
6. Smell it
7. Be present with your feelings as they surface
8. Notice those feelings
9. Sit for a few moments and write down your observations of the food and your feelings
connected to it
10. Close your journal
11. Pause and think for a moment, offering thanks for this food
12. Pick up your utensil
13. Take a small bite or spoonful.
14. Place the food in your mouth and allow it to rest on the tip of your tongue.
15. Swirl it around in your mouth for about 3 to 7 seconds
16. Notice the sensations that come up for you
17. Slowly chew it or allow it to gently glide down your throat.
18. Put down your fork or spoon and resist picking it up for a moment. If you have to sit on your hands, then do it
19. Just sit with those feelings for about 10 -15 seconds
20. Repeat the process from stage 12-19 until you are satisfied. Notice the degree of that satisfaction. Do this at least 3 times during the week. The rest of the times eat at your normal pace. See what you discover.

Now that you have an understanding that self acceptance begins with making peace with food, in the next chapter, we'll really explore using those frame games to discuss how to take big steps to makeover a fat and ugly self image.