

Food
is not the
Problem:
Deal With What is!

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Note for Librarians: A cataloguing record for this book is available from Library and Archives Canada at www.collectionscanada.ca/amicus/index-e.html

ISBN 1-4251-0519-X



*Printed in Victoria, BC, Canada. Printed on paper with minimum 30% recycled fibre.
Trafford's print shop runs on "green energy" from solar, wind and other environmentally-friendly power sources.*

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With Gratitude

First and foremost, I would like to thank my mother, Linda Patton. Not only did you offer spelling and grammatical suggestions, thereby ensuring my readers would get the most benefit and enjoyment from this book, but you also provided me with the gift of your emotional support and encouragement throughout this project. I couldn't have done it without you, Ma! I feel so blessed by the precious gift of your love and caring in all areas of my life. I appreciate you so! I am also deeply touched by your consent to share your story with my readers so that they may understand my experience better. Thank you for your openness and courage. I love you.

Steve-O, thanks so much for all your support over the years. I am so very lucky to have you for a step-father and as a grandfather for Ben. And thank you for the wonderful photo you took for the book. You definitely have talent!

Peter Bion, you have been a true friend in all ways. This project would not be coming to fruition at this time if not for your support of the Centre and of my work.

Karen Stein, you are my dear friend, mentor and colleague. Without your constant support and passion for our Centre and the work we do, this book may not have seen the light of day. You are a daily blessing in my life, and I thank you for all of the gentle ways you invite me to challenge myself and to grow.

Brooke Finnigan-Holst, your enthusiasm for the Centre and its purpose helped me to see that what we were doing had the potential to make a great difference in many people's lives. Your ingenuity and creativity played a large role in bringing the Centre to where it is today. Thank you.

Virginia Preston, for keeping us organized. You brought an air of respect, integrity and professionalism to our Centre that has taken

us to a new level. I am supremely grateful for the connection we share.

Beth Burton-Krahn, your sense of humour has been such a great gift in my life; thank you for the lightness. And thank you for your gentle communication and the integrity that you bring to your work and to our friendship. Namaste.

And last but by no means least, to my clients. Your courage, strength and determination to grow and to heal have been such a great honour to witness. Thank you for sharing your journey with me.

INTRODUCTION

a.k.a. Why do I want to read this book?

Do you often eat when you are not hungry? Do you eat beyond the point of comfortable fullness? Do you fantasize about what you are going to eat when you next get to be alone with food? Do you feel shame and guilt for eating certain types of foods, or for eating at certain times of the day? Perhaps you restrict yourself from eating when you are hungry. Do you imagine what you would like to eat, maybe even prepare it for others, and then get off on the experience of not allowing it for yourself? If you answered *yes* to any of these questions, you are using food to cope. If this is the case, this book is for you. Welcome to the start of a new way of being in relationship with food and with your body.

The purpose of this book is to provide you with the education and skills you need to heal from your use of food as a coping strategy. It will also greatly benefit you if you use alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, sex, relationships, self-harm, rage, and any other coping behaviours to help you numb or soothe painful thoughts or feelings.

If you would like to get an immediate sense of how you will benefit from our work together, flip to Chapter 7, and have a look at the coping strategy flow chart. If any of those patterns of thoughts, feelings, or behaviours seem familiar to you, know that you will gain an opportunity to heal those patterns by exploring and implementing the tools outlined in the chapters to follow.

As a clinician with over a decade of experience specializing in the field of disordered eating, depression, and trauma, I have come

to identify three key areas of focus in supporting clients to heal: your relationship with food; your relationship with yourself; and your relationships with others. My intention is that by the time we have completed our work together, you will be confident in your ability to address these three key areas in a way that continually enhances your sense of confidence and trust in yourself, and that provides you with a life which is free of food and body-image focus.

If you are one of the millions of men and women who use food to cope in one of the ways I described above, take a moment and ask yourself the following questions:

- What exactly is it that you do with food right now?
- How does it impact your feelings about your body at this time?
- How do you feel when you engage in that way of being with food?
- What are the thoughts that you have when you engage in this behaviour?
- What are the things that you do or don't do in your life because of how you think and feel about your relationship with your body and food?
- What is the impact on your life of thinking and feeling and behaving this way?
- What is the price that you and others around you pay for your current behaviours, thoughts, and feelings about food and about your body?

Given your answers to these questions, you might feel reinforced in your belief that it truly is your behaviour around food, and your non-compliant body, that are to blame for how you feel about yourself and for what is not working in your life at this time. You may feel that you have just proven to yourself yet again that food *is* the problem, and, if you could just change this, everything else would shift; you wouldn't feel so crappy, sad or angry; you wouldn't think so negatively of yourself and believe that you truly are undeserving

of happiness and peace in your life; you wouldn't hate your body; you'd be getting out more; you'd feel safe engaging in relationships more fully and deeply; you wouldn't be afraid to say what's on your mind; you wouldn't be thinking about harming yourself; you'd exercise more; you'd take better care of yourself overall.

Based on this story, everything seems to hinge on you getting a solid handle on your relationship with food. No wonder food is such a powerful force in your life. No wonder there is such an emotional charge around your current relationship with food and so much self-judgement.

What we are going to explore together in the pages to come, and what you are about to learn and to quickly prove to yourself, is that the issue is not food. And it's not about your body either. Food and body focus are just symptoms of a deeper concern. As with isolation, anxiety, depression, fear, procrastination, and negative self-talk, food and body focus stem from something deeper and do not arise in and of themselves.

You cannot focus your emotional, psychological, and behavioural efforts on changing your relationship with food and body image and expect any lasting change to occur. If you have picked up this book, it means that on a gut level you know that dieting, or restriction of any kind, is not going to get you where you want to go.

You may be coming to this process with a great deal of judgement of yourself and the assumption that if you only tried harder; if you only had more willpower; if you only were more committed or less lazy; if you really, really wanted things to change, you would be able to make that diet or exercise program stick. Given the line of thinking that is so prevalent in our society, namely, that it is something wrong or lacking in you that prevents your success with diet and exercise, it would be perfectly appropriate for you to be entering this process of lasting growth and transformation with some self-judgement.

Regardless of the judgement and self-recrimination you may be carrying about your perceived past failures, the important thing is that you are willing to allow for the possibility, however remote it

may seem, that there is something beyond food and body image that is triggering you to use food and body focus to cope. The process outlined in this book will identify what that underlying trigger is and what you can do to begin to heal and overcome that pattern so you can come to a place of never again thinking of using food to cope.

My goal for you is a free and easy relationship with food and with your body. The pages that follow will provide you with a step-by-step approach to identifying and healing not just your relationship with food but also the underlying trigger. This will allow you to let go of your food and body focus once and for all.

Let's begin the journey.

NB: In the interest of simplicity, I have chosen to use the pronoun "she". Please know that we do have male clients at the CEDRIC Centre, and we respect that these issues pertain to men as well as women.