

PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH SUSAN

Examining Your Relationship With Food.

Let's face it, diets do work. As long as you follow the plan, it works. It takes off the weight. But they do not address the reasons why we reach for food, our relationship with food. Yes, relationship. We all have a relationship with food. Like any relationship, some are good for us and some are not. Only through exploration and awareness can a person really understand their relationship with food.

So, why do you eat? The correct answer is to feed our bodies the nutrients it needs. But how many of us eat to nutrient our bodies? Many people instead eat to soothe and distract themselves. Food makes us feel comforted. After all that was the first way all of us were comforted. As infants when we cried we were fed and when we skinned our knee we were offered ice cream. We live in a culture where we want to take away the discomfort. As a result we are not equipped to deal with discomfort. So we distract ourselves from the discomfort. How many times have you had a bad day? Upon coming home your first stop is the refrigerator and this is not because you are actually hungry. Instead you are utilizing what Susan Simon-Fleischer calls the "compulsive eating chain." Instead of experiencing the feelings, we feel a need to eat. We eat and then feel bad or out of control. We get angry with ourselves for eating and focus on the out of control eating and focus on our weight. Although what has really happened is your initial feelings such as anger, anxiety, loneliness have been replaced by unpleasant thoughts about your eating, your lack of control and the size of your body.

These self-accusations have become more comfortable or familiar than the feelings you had which sent you to the food. The chain, which serves as a distraction, postpones an honest look at what is really going on. It can provide relief in a short-term way by removing you from the pain. After all, food does not talk back. We give food the power to make us feel better, to squash feelings and to provide comfort. When we give ourselves the chance to explore feelings we often discover that another perhaps more

confusing, uncomfortable feeling lies behind it. Remember the old adage, "Don't talk with food in your mouth." When you are eating, you are not talking. You are putting something in your mouth and like the food you are swallowing your thoughts and feelings.

Susan Simon-Fleischer, MSW, LCSW has been a practicing psychotherapist and weight loss specialist for over 20 years. By combining her psychotherapy training and her personal lifelong struggle to lose weight she has developed a program for helping people examine their own relationship with food. She provides individual and group sessions. Presently she is in the process of starting a new support group called "Examining Your Relationship with Food." This group will help you determine if you are using food to self-soothe and to regulate mood. Examine your past, present, and future relationship with food. Explore your current body image and identify if it plays a role in keeping you stuck. Through awareness and new insight, develop new ways to deal with intense feelings and life's stressors.

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