

PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH SUSAN

The Pain Doesn't Disappear with the Pounds

The pounds disappeared but the pain did not, cried Rhoda in our recent psychotherapy session. Rhoda had lost close to 120 pounds from weight loss surgery and was now in my office dealing with all the pain that was still there. "I was always told if I lost the weight I'd be happy" she continued to disclose. "So the weight is mostly off and my father still does not give me the attention I need. My husband still works all these hours. I thought once I lost weight the men in my life would want to spend time with me, that I'd be more loveable."

I told Rhoda she was correct. The pain does not disappear with the pounds. Instead the pain becomes more magnified. Prior to losing the weight she was able to hide her feelings behind the weight. She attributed her feelings of being unlovable to her weight. Now that the weight was gone she had to look and examine her relationship with her father and husband and it was very painful.

For many people who have or have had a weight problem the focus has been on their eating and not on the feelings or issues that triggered the eating. The eating has served as an excellent distraction which successfully buries the feelings. So much so, that it is not uncommon for people to say to me that they are not sure how they are feeling. And then once they become aware of their feelings they do not know what to do with these feelings.

Pain is uncomfortable, for many of us eating is comfort. We do not like to seeing someone in pain or uncomfortable. When a baby cries we often think of soothing the baby by feeding him or her. There are so many times and places food is given to soothe pain. Remember receiving a lollypop after an immunization shot? How many times has a child been given an ice cream cone after skinning their knee?

So, now after weight loss surgery many patients come into my office and do not know how to deal with pain or disappointment. They do not know how to identify feelings or what to do with these feelings. They feel guilty. They look great and

believe they should be happy. They are sometimes more scared and feel vulnerable (naked) and unhappy. They do not understand...they usually are getting the attention they always wanted, (although sometimes the attention is not from where they wanted, such as Rhoda's case). They fit into clothes they always dreamed of...so what is wrong with them they wonder?

There is nothing wrong with you I constantly reply. As Rhoda so profoundly phrased it... "the pain does not disappear with the pounds."

*In my psychotherapy practice I work with individuals and run groups helping WLS patients examine their underlying issues that have been buried and hidden under the weight.

Susan Simon-Fleischer, M.S.W., LCSW, CSW-R, BCD offers individual sessions and support groups which focuses on the principles of *Examining Relationships with Food*.

For more information, please contact:

Susan at (973) 535-3626 or at www.psychotherapywithsusan.com