

***Stop Emotional Eating,
Fix Food Cravings,
Find your Metabolism and More™***

**Based on the book “Oxygen Mask-breathe easier
about your relationship with food™**

Stop Emotional Eating, Fix Food Cravings, Find Your Metabolism and More™

by Beth Castle 2010

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To Teresa
With Love

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Introduction

Why O2 Mask?

“Stop Emotional Eating, Fix Food Cravings, Find Your Metabolism and More”™ - based on the Book “Oxygen Mask – breathe easier about your relationship with food.”™ With Dietary Technician Beth Castle’s audio or book, you are quickly guided to implement strategies, solutions and a better relationship with food by addressing challenges like Emotional Eating, Food Cravings, Metabolism, and so much more!

Go through the audio or book and you will see how Beth guides you into making better decisions about food and feeling great about it. Enjoy your journey!

As you may know, O2 is the symbol for Oxygen. Why did I want to title the book Oxygen Mask? And how on earth, you may be asking yourself, does it relate to weight loss and weight management? How is it relevant to you and your personal relationship with food?

Writing this book began with a story. In 1996 I went to Mexico with a friend. Shortly after takeoff, to our shock and utter horror, the oxygen masks dropped down from the ceiling. I had never experienced this before, but I knew that the masks only came down if there was a critical situation and the passenger cabin pressure was threatened. My first thought was, “Am I going to die today?”

Immediately I looked around the cabin to see what everyone else was doing. All the passengers looked at each other, the same level of intense fear etched on their faces. As I grabbed for the mask, I saw my friend was motionless with fright. Instinctively, I thought I should assist my friend with

her mask first, but then, as if hearing a tape playing in my head, I instantly recalled the preflight instructions: “Place the mask on *yourself first* before assisting others.” Without a second thought, I followed the drill. After securing my mask, I helped my friend with her mask.

To make a long story short, this incident ended happily. The oxygen masks had automatically deployed because the aircraft lost cabin pressure due to a minor malfunction.

We landed safely, and 16 hours later the repaired aircraft continued on, delivering us to our Mexican destination to begin a week of serenity and relaxation, which, after the stressful flight, we needed more than ever.

After surviving that experience, I had an opportunity to think about the concept behind passenger oxygen masks. Why, I asked, do flight attendants always stress that passengers should put our own mask on *first* prior to assisting any other people? The answer is simple. We cannot help others if we are oxygen deprived, weak, drained of energy, or are no longer around to help them. Interesting concept isn’t it?

On the other hand, if we are strong, we can do a better job of caring for others. If we are healthy, we won’t have to drain our energy in order to be there for others. Putting oneself first is not a matter of being *selfish* or *self-serving*; on the contrary, it is about *self-care* and the desire to be healthy so that we are able to care for others.

As a Dietary Technician and a weight management counselor, applying this concept to my practice was easy because it provided my clients with an obvious and natural connection between their desire to manage their weight and a sound motivation for doing it. Fundamentally, my clients

with weight issues have a challenge with their relationship with food. If they could establish a healthy relationship with food, they would have a better relationship with themselves and, in turn, with others. Without being anxious about being deprived of food, they could focus their energy to more positive things in their lives. Just as failing to maintain a proper supply of oxygen in our bodies is detrimental to our health, being overweight or underweight is unhealthy. If we fail to maintain our health, we cannot be there to help those who mean the most to us.

The phrase “Put on your own oxygen mask first!” has become a metaphor sometimes used in our society. It is another way of saying, “Take care of *yourself* first, so you can help those you love.” It is a good metaphor because it is true and has a practical and easy application. This *Oxygen Mask* is also a tool—a *journaling system*—that will help you to develop a healthy relationship with food—and that in turn will help you obtain a healthier body, mind and soul. Taking care of yourself first means you can take care of others because you are healthy and able.

Why I decided to develop a journaling system and write Oxygen Mask.

When I was 14-years-old, my best friend was diagnosed with diabetes. Being a compassionate, caring friend, I tried to support her. She only pushed me away, and along with other teen challenges, our very close friendship became distant and strained. My best friend took one path in life and I chose another. Even though I had my own issues and struggles, my best friend chose a path that seemed more difficult than mine. She chose to find help elsewhere. Even after I lost touch with her, I was influenced to help people like my friend by entering the health field. Unfortunately, I don’t see my friend very much anymore, but I am grateful

for the influence that she had on my life. When I meet with new clients, I am reminded of my former best friend's sadness—and that reminds me about why.

I graduated in 1986 as a Dietary Technician. In the ensuing years I worked with a local health region, helping people with food issues. Since 1993, I've coached hundreds of people — helping them eat right, lose pounds, or manage their current weight, and generally feel better about themselves. I've successfully coached strangers as well as people personally close to me.

Whenever my clients told me, “You know what is working the best for me...?” I would encourage them to get a journal and write down all of those things that they noticed about themselves and their relationship with food. In the long run, the things that they perceived as contributing to their success would be the very ideas that would ensure their success for the future.

So? Great idea or what! I told my clients that if they would journal their ideas about what worked for them in controlling their relationship with food, it would be like their own little weight management bible, written by them, just for them, and exclusively about them. It would help them understand how they tick—almost like an owner's manual that each person would write for himself or herself.

Well, no one that I knew followed through with this, not even my closest friends and family. Unfortunately too many of the people I worked with gained back their weight—and perhaps even more. They went back to the old habits and the states of distress that landed them in my office or in my classes in the first place. To this day, when I bump into clients that I have coached who have not successfully man-

aged their weight, they say that they are too embarrassed about failing; I have even had some clients avoid me in social situations because of their own guilt and shame.

At first I felt terrible, believing that I didn't do my job *well enough* to help them be as successful as possible. Then I decided I knew what was missing. It wasn't a particular diet or counselor they lacked. People needed a tool to help them understand their relationship with food and what they could do to break the cycle of unhealthy choices and habits. People needed to be empowered to be responsible for their own choices.

When some of my closest family members tried to lose weight, I asked them, "How are you going to make certain that you are successful in keeping it off this time?" Some of them chose counseling to ensure that they would get to the root of the problem. "Great!" I thought to myself, "How can I help? What are they missing in their program or in their counseling that I could provide or help them discover for themselves?"

Reflecting on past experiences with counseling my own clients to journal, I saw the problem: the nearly universal diet program advice, which is "to journal", will only work if the person knows *how* and *why* they are journaling. That was the missing piece in an otherwise important tool and method—and I knew how to bridge that gap. I knew this particular tool, if applied, would lead to success.

Immediately, I started writing the missing piece that would help my closest family: the *Oxygen Mask* system: a self-discovery Journal and Operator's Manual. I knew this particular tool, if applied, would lead to success. Later on I thought, "Wow! If I do this for them, I know that others can use this tool as well."

You must do something to end the cycle of returning to self-defeating behaviors that are reflected in your relationship with food. By reading *Oxygen Mask*, participating in the journaling exercises I have designed for this book, and by being honest with yourself, you will have the best tool to ensure your success. Though recording ideas and feelings that promote understanding of what works best in your program, you will become aware of how to let go of what is getting in your way and you will develop strategies for success as you strive to achieve your weight management goals. This will allow you to breathe easier about your relationship with food and not only achieve those goals, but also help you maintain your ideal weight.

Say this to yourself now: “I want to breathe easier about my relationship with food.” Then, take a DEEP breath and let’s get started.

What is the Oxygen Mask Journal system and how can it work for you?

When you have the opportunity to meet me, you will see the excitement that I have about being able to lessen the pain that many people associate with their relationship with food. I am passionate about using my method to make a difference in other people’s lives; I believe I can teach people how to breathe easier about eating and food. I am passionate about helping you use my *Oxygen Mask* journaling methods.

You will notice that there are two books in the *Oxygen Mask* journaling system.

The one you are holding describes my methodology. I am going to ask you to fill in this *Oxygen Mask* self-discovery journal with detailed information and thoughts that apply to your life. As your guide, I will help you by showing

you *how* to journal and what to journal. (See *Chapter One, Putting Your Oxygen Mask on First.*) In this journal, you'll be doing some guided introspective exercises and writing down your thoughts. I'll show you how to pay particular attention to what your mind is saying to you—this is called “self-talk” and can consist of positive or negative messages that we send ourselves. (I describe self-talk in Chapter Two. *Oxygen Deprivation: Negative Self-talk*, also describes what self-talk sounds like and its implications so that you will know how to recognize it and what to do with it.)

Oxygen Mask is a self-discovery journal; it is your personal workbook. I will show you how to journal, and in the ensuing pages and exercises, you will discover your personal issues about your relationship with food. With my help, your journal entries will reveal that change is not only desirable, but also possible. You will feel empowered, and moreover, you'll develop your own plan for change.

Here is how I would recommend that you use this book...

Read the entire book without analyzing your thoughts in that moment. Then take some time to start to think of these various topics throughout your day or week.

Ask ...

- What do you tell myself?
- Start to listen to yourself.

Next, read the book again with pen in hand. This time, take the time at each question so that you have time to hear your response. Start writing your “automatic” thoughts on the paper.

Most of us know exactly what to do when it comes to losing weight or eating healthy, why then is it so difficult to keep the weight off, or to keep those health habits?

Let me explain. If your career was in nutrition/health/fitness it would be easier to implement because it is second nature and your “job”. So you would be more of a natural at it.

If you were a hair stylist you would have habits of taking care of your hair - that would be second nature. If you were an accountant you would be great at numbers and that would be second nature.

The second *Oxygen Mask -“Operator’s Manual”* journal is smaller and designed to travel everywhere with you. It is designed to transfer the positive ideas, strategies and solutions that you have worked out in this larger book into a portable format that is always at your fingertips.

Again, I will show you *how, what, and why* to write in the *Operator’s Manual* so that you can use this tool to its optimum potential.

In it you will record your new awareness about your relationship with food, inspirational positive self-talk you have chosen to listen to, and strategies you have perfected that will help you with losing or maintaining your weight—or just eating better! The *Operator’s Manual* will become a personal guide that you continually revisit to be inspired by what you have learned to feel better about yourself.

The “Operator’s Manual”™ is designed to be there when you need the information/support/strategies and guidance! You wrote it, you know what will work for you! So the day when you revert back to your old habits... (Yes, it will happen to

most of us.) ...when you revert back to your old habits, don't beat yourself up and play pretend like the washer shrunk your jeans again and play that for 20-30 pounds. GET right into your "*Operator's Manual*" and start implementing what works for you! Get back to what you have forgotten and get right back on track before it is a problem!

This journaling system is designed to help you learn about and confront areas of deep emotions associated with your relationship with food. It's not comfortable for anyone to bring up some painful areas; I don't like the thought of making you or anyone uncomfortable. Do I think that you are broken? No. You have just fallen into some poor eating habits.

In today's society we are trying to be the best at *everything* and do *everything*. You may have many things going on in your head. That is why it is SO important to document what is going in order help you get to your goals and what will keep YOU there!

Most of you know exactly what you need to do to get to your goals with regards to weight. Now with Oxygen Mask Book or Audio and Operator's Manual, you can write it down with my guidance and take a breather and rest your brain.

Perhaps you've been too busy; or you've prioritized family and children's needs before your own; or you've been more laid back about food choices and not taken the time to consider what you are consuming; or you've simply forgotten what works for you to eat successfully. Perhaps you're at a point where you just need a couple of new tools and your relationship with food will become a complete success plan. Or maybe you are just at the beginning stage of coping with poor food management and unsure of what to do next. At the other extreme, you could be so disgusted with

yourself and food that you are about to give up on any plan to manage your eating and your weight.

Don't stop here. I will guide you to strategies that will show you how to recognize and drop all of these excuses. You will remember who gets the oxygen mask first—you do!

I take strength in knowing that my *Oxygen Mask* method is the stepping-stone to help you recognize and choose to move past the pain associated with food. Yes, you *have* to do this to get past this hurdle as you learn to breathe easier about your relationship with food. And, yes, you *can* do it—one day at a time!

So, as you can see, *Oxygen Mask* is more than a book. It is a tool, a two-journal system that will assist you in putting yourself *first*, so that you will be stronger and healthier when you are called to be of assistance to others. Putting on your own oxygen mask means breathing with unobstructed lungs and a clear mind about your relationship with food.

Are you going to need to practice this journaling method for all time? No. *Oxygen Mask* is a tool to use when you need it to get healthy and achieve a state of being that leaves you refreshed and not anxious about your relationship with food. Eventually you will adapt your habits and change. If a situation should arise where you feel out of control around food or struggle with strategies or choices, you have only to reference your very own personalized *Operator's Manual* to guide you to solutions.

I believe that within each person are *all* the answers to maintaining a healthy relationship with food—and journaling is the way and the means to uncover both the challenges and the inspiration to achieve that relationship.

As you become accustomed to using this journaling tool, you may use it less and less as you develop a healthy perspective about eating that becomes so intuitive that you can go without the assistance of your *Oxygen Mask* journals. Just as your body needs life-giving oxygen to supply your blood, and in turn your organs, muscles and skin, *Oxygen Mask* supplies the means to achieve a healthy relationship with food and eating.

Just as you take deep, full breaths that fuel your body and brain with oxygen, using *Oxygen Mask* will fuel your efforts to develop strategies and approaches to food that are healthier for your body. You will be stronger—enabled! Guided by my *Oxygen Mask* method, you will ultimately add years to your life. By breathing easier in your relationship with food, you'll achieve a healthier body, more positive energy, a better relationship with other people in your life, and in turn a healthier life—mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

I also want you to experience some joy in the food department and take the pressure off yourself with regard to eating. With this journaling system I hope that you will learn to take pleasure in food without anxiety or guilt. *Oxygen Mask* is a practical and easy method to teach you how to breathe easier about food.

So, take a DEEP breath! Refresh yourself with oxygen, and get ready to learn how you can use *Oxygen Mask* to change your life.

(Extra *Operator's Manuals* sold separately at www.o2mask.com)



Put Your Oxygen Mask On First

If journaling is a technique that many diet programs and counselors recommend, why doesn't it seem to work for so many people? The short answer is that those programs and counselors rarely provide the tools and the instructions about how to journal.

In my experience, people will nod their heads in agreement when they are asked to keep a written record of what they are doing to manage their weight and their relationship with food. Perhaps some of them will even keep a journal for a while. Many programs urge people to keep a food journal that records what they eat by making daily lists. They dutifully fill in spaces for “breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks” and then become bored with repetition or fearful being judged for what they've written. The food journal goes on the shelf, never to be used again.

Most people have good intentions to journal, believe it may help them, and even start a journal—then simply drop the enterprise. Why? Because these people don't know how to journal, much less why they should journal. There is a disconnect between the tool and making the tool work for their lives.

I have designed a journaling system that works because I show you why you should journal and then show you how to journal. *Oxygen Mask* is a guided journey that shows you how to create a tool for yourself that is personal, empowering, and effective because it helps you develop insight and awareness into your relationship with food and with eating.

The *Oxygen Mask* system works. Why? Because my method doesn't dictate all the answers; it simply directs you on a journey of self-discovery for the ideas and strategies that will work for you to achieve success. The journey is yours; I

walk beside you, offering some strategies and some signposts for your consideration. At the end of the day, though, you make the choices, do the work, and design a program for your success. You become the expert on what works for you; you write it in your *Operator's Manual* so that your strategies are personal, proven and referenced at your fingertips. It contains YOUR positive strategies for dealing with every personal food issue—from emotional eating to dining out, from grocery shopping to designing your game plan for success. You put your oxygen mask on *first*!

Why journal?

When people write down what they are thinking about, they have the benefit of learning more about themselves. For some people, the words that flow to the paper can come as a surprise, a revelation of thoughts and beliefs that we didn't know we held inside. Most people who journal acknowledge that allowing ourselves to spontaneously write down ideas that are currently flowing through our minds will show us parts of our thinking that subconsciously controls or influences our behavior.

Our subconscious can sometimes sound like a committee of strangers, each speaking at the same time. The topics vary: difficult concepts, current concerns, old memories, new ideas, future plans, resentments, ponderings—a veritable grocery list of thoughts related and unrelated, dreams and fears, profound contemplations and everyday mundane details all inexplicably tossed together.

Writing does two things. First, it slows down the subconscious, orders thoughts, brings some to the foreground, and puts some away for later consideration. Writing can focus thought. Secondly, when we write in a journal our thoughts find a kind of logical organization; they come to

the page in one voice, a stream of ideas presented through one word following another. Sometimes we are unaware of even having some of these ideas. Journaling is a way of getting in touch with your inner self, your inner thoughts. A journal is a place and a tool of self-discovery.

How to journal

First of all, you need a journal, a book with blank spaces to write down your thoughts. You're holding just such a book in your hands: the *Oxygen Mask* self-discovery journal. You also have the small *Oxygen Mask Operator's Manual* that you will use to transfer key concepts, ideas, and strategies that you have uncovered in the exercises as I guide you through this larger journal and then direct you about what to write in the Operator's Manual.

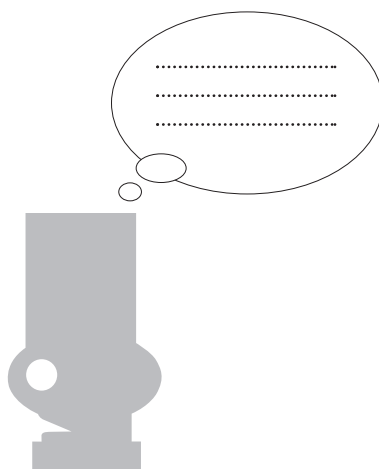
As I had mentioned before, read the book straight through. Next, gather both the main book and the Operator's Manual, along with a pen, and find a time and a space to sit quietly—try to pick the same hour and place to do this every day. That may mean getting up a half an hour earlier every day, or simply designating a quiet time for yourself that you and others in your household will respect. Set a time limit for your journaling time. At first, it may be only 15 minutes, later you may want to increase the time to 30 minutes or even an hour. Whatever works best for you. Keep in mind that you control your journaling time; you make the commitment and the plan to keep it.

Without taking pen to paper, just sit quietly and appreciate that this is YOUR time. Let your hands relax in your lap. Don't hold the journals and pen in your hands, but place them next to you. You are taking these few minutes to care for yourself. Listen to your own breathing; give yourself permission to take these few uninterrupted minutes for

yourself. Know that the world isn't likely to fall apart in the next few minutes without you being there. Let answering machines take the phone calls; turn off your cell phone and fax. Just breathe.

Feeling sufficiently relaxed, turn to the first section in your *Oxygen Mask* self-discovery journal (or *Stop Emotional Eating*, *Fix Food Cravings*, *Find Your Metabolism and More*). I will be your guide, introducing topics and providing questions. You will find each section has space to write your responses and thoughts. I urge you to use a pen rather than a pencil. This is a private journal; feel free to write in it, cross out words, and highlight sections without editing yourself or erasing what flows from within you to the page.

As I guide you through journaling exercises, if at any point you hear some self-talk, no matter what it is, write it down. Right away. Don't alter it or analyze it, just write it down. This is very important to your success. When you suspend judgment on whether or not the ideas are important, what you write spontaneously will get some ideas flowing. Don't worry if the self-talk is negative or positive, just jot it all down.



What to write in your journal

Staring at a blank page, pen in hand can be daunting. “What do I write?” is the first question we all ask. Fortunately, using my method, you don’t have to ask this question. I’ll pose some questions, offer some examples, and then provide the space for you to write.

Journaling is a process. Keep in mind that your ideas will change as you learn more about yourself. This is to be expected. If I haven’t listed questions that elicit your exact thoughts, then you’ll find extra space for you to expand what has come to mind. Again, you are writing this for YOU, not for me, so don’t write what you think I want to hear, write what is important for you. Be honest. This is a confidential journal, for you and by you. Let go of the fear that you will be judged on what you write—or that there are “right” answers. *Oxygen Mask* is a journal of self-discovery, a work in progress, and a journey of self-discovery.

If you are having a challenge imagining using a journal just yet, that is OK. I will work with you in small steps to get you there! I had many clients tell me that it seems too far away to imagine how a journal can help them change. When you work on smaller goals, you will get in the habit of journaling and learning more about yourself. You build from there—one day at a time—learning and becoming aware. Awareness is the first step toward making changes!

Here’s an example of how you will be using the Oxygen Mask self-discovery journal.

I might pose the question: What food do you “love”? If you responded that you love bread products, my next questions may reveal that you weren’t aware that you overindulge in those foods. On your own, through your journal, you may

discover that this food group, though apparently a healthy choice, has been adding to your weight because you take every opportunity to eat breads and cereals. Then you realize that you especially choose to overindulge in breads when you are stressed. You haven't done anything about altering your relationship with this food because, until now, you weren't aware of it.

After you journal some feelings about eating bread products, you may come to a new awareness about why you overindulge in this food group. You then would be empowered to put together some strategies of how to handle bread products in your life.

With my guidance, you might take these steps:

1. Discover a challenging area: you become aware that you are eating too much bread and cereals.
2. You journal in this book and explore the self-talk that you had before, during or after the event of over-indulging in bread products. (Possibly you have been unaware of overeating bread products, but have no relevant self-talk about this area. That is OK; it is just as important that you are now aware of what you are eating and what you are telling yourself about the food or how it will make you feel.)
3. You examine and alter your self-talk and/or your feelings associated with bread products. If it was a negative self-talk, you can change it to be positive. Perhaps you recognize that you are eating for fuel and nourishment, not reacting to any emotion or motivation other than to be physically nutritionally satisfied. Your problem is that you haven't paid attention to feelings of being satisfied. Whatever track your self-discovery journaling

has followed, the result is the same: an awareness that a certain food group challenges you. You are now aware that you should be cutting back on the amount of bread products in your life and you chose to make a change in your life to reduce that amount.

4. After adjusting your self-talk, you are able to plan some strategies that will help you be aware of and reduce the number of bread products you will consume in a day.
5. At this point you would record the challenge area into your *Oxygen Mask Operator's Manual*, transferring your self-talk to check that you are staying on track with positive thoughts.
6. Next, in the *Operator's Manual*, you record strategies you can choose to implement when you are faced with a challenge concerning bread products.

The *Operator's Manual*, always at your fingertips, is the guide you have written to remind yourself about successful strategies you have devised to promote healthy eating and healthy thinking. Eventually you will breathe easier when it comes to dealing with a food group you formerly found challenging. Eventually, your awareness and your responses to bread products will come more naturally as you exchange old habits for new ones.

Predictably, you will develop different perspectives as you work with your journal and as your life evolves. It is very important to keep up with your journaling as changes occur in your life. The *Operator's Manual* is always there to help you stay on track, or if you should go astray, it will help you return to, readjust, or revise your strategies.



Oxygen Deprivation: Negative Self-Talk

Through my career as a Dietary Technician, I learned to become a great listener, an effective coach, and an objective friend to my clients. I've felt their gratitude. But that's not why I wrote *Oxygen Mask*. I wrote this book because I know what it is like to have pain associated with your innermost self; I know the damage that negative self-talk can reap.

Does my own story relate to food? Absolutely! Sometimes food was my enemy. I tensed at the very thought of food. During these times my own self-image, history and future were governed by damaging self-talk. Using my training, developing this journaling system, and putting into practice what I'm about to teach you, restored my healthy relationship with eating and food. I learned to put my own oxygen mask on first!

Self-talk is the internal chatter we have with ourselves that happens so fast that we often don't even realize what is going on in our head, we just hear it. The inner chatter can be a collection of judgments from others we heard when we were children. The talk can be associated with our culture, our beliefs, and suggestions from others coming into our heads. Self-talk is formulated into what we accept, what we fear, or what we believe to be true; it guides our perceptions and actions.

Often we say things in our heads automatically and this is reflected in our speech and our actions. For example, can you really hide your feelings when inside you are angry? Either your body language is a dead giveaway or you so successfully stuff your feelings inside that even you are not aware of your own corrosive anger. Too often, whether we are conscious of it or not, our head is busy chatting away to us. Some days I think it would be so nice to have an on/off button or a volume knob for "head-chatter"!

What do we know about self-talk? A brilliant Superbowl Commercial for *Tide to Go*® instant stain remover is called “My Talking Stain”. It depicts a job interview where the potential employee has a stain on his shirt. The brown blot on the white shirt is so noticeable and distracting that the interviewer’s self-talk about the stain drowns out anything the man he is interviewing has to say. “Blah, blah, blah...” fills the sound-scape, ruining the interview moment. Sometimes my own self-talk sounds like this—very loud and not making a lot of sense.

When your self-talk overrides your reality, there are some revealing verbal clues in your everyday language. For instance, do you find yourself using the word *If*? This word suggests conditions apply, or that there is a possibility of incompleteness. It projects an overriding note of uncertainty. Have you found yourself being guided by self-talk that has you saying:

If I am successful...
If I get to goal weight...
If I keep it off...
If I eat with self-control...

Ask yourself: “Where did I get the word *if*? Why am I saying that?” Look hard to find assumptions you may have made about yourself based on negative self-talk that puts unreasonable conditions on your appraisal of your own abilities or goals. Then, consciously try to substitute the word *when* for the word *if*:

When I am successful...
When I get to goal weight...
When I keep it off...
When I eat with self-control...

If is conditional and potentially negative. When suggests that something *will* happen; it means it is only a matter of time until something is achieved and thus puts a positive spin to your statements and to your outlook. Positive self-talk can be a reminder to yourself that you are capable and teachable; positive self-talk can keep you on track and feeling in control.

Self-talk can be a source of encouragement and hope, or it can be damaging and self-defeating.

When it is negative, self-talk turns up the volume on statements like “I am so stupid,” or “What an idiot,” or “I’ll never be successful,” or “I will never get it.” When you say or think these negative things, you will begin to believe your own internal assessment that you are not bright, not capable, and that you will not be successful. Negative self-talk can be a self-fulfilling prophecy for failure and destruction.

It’s a good thing that others can’t hear the thoughts in our heads, although it might keep us from saying the negative/ destructive things we do say to ourselves. How do you know if your self-talk is negative? Just ask yourself if some of your self-talk could be said out loud, would you want other people to hear it? You probably wouldn’t repeat what you think about yourself if others could to hear you. Sometimes we are not very polite to ourselves, are we?

As a nutrition counselor, I listened to many negative thoughts that my clients confided about themselves. Sometimes I was able to turn them around by asking if they really believed what they were saying. Other times I asked them to go deeper to find the origins of their negativity. It was never an easy task.

So, check your self-talk. Is it positive or negative? Is it setting you up for failure or success? Think it through! You have the power to know the difference and to choose to be positive in your self-talk. Be aware and make the adjustments.

Some of the directions I will take you in this journal are going to bring out some issues you are trying to get away from or would rather not bring up. Some of what you will discover may be unpleasant and some things may come as a complete surprise. Without getting to the source of negative self-talk, you will have little room to maneuver in the awareness and change department. If your issues surround eating and your relationship with food, then you must confront negative self-talk. Time to put on your own oxygen mask and take care of yourself first.

You are probably saying to yourself that you know all of this. Well you are right—you *do* know all of this. So why are you at the point of having to read this book? I will tell you. You are either listening to old tapes and old self-talk in your head that you know is leading you astray, or you are unaware of the self-talk and are operating on autopilot. Sometimes, I think of it as *autopilot denial*. Our body and mind are very powerful—so much so we fight with them daily as we make food decisions.

Let me give you an illustration. Have you ever had an internal dialogue with yourself that has gone something like this?

“I am *not* going to have dessert...”

“Yeah, but, I *want* dessert! ...”

“But I can’t *afford* to have dessert...”

“Oooh, just one bite...”

“Ooooh crap, just one more bite...and another...what am I thinking!”

“Oh, you should just finish it; can’t have it go to waste...wasting food is terrible...”

“Oh, no! Look! I just messed up the whole week...”

“You are such a failure.... I am disgusted with you...”

“You’re right. I might as well just blow this whole meal and this whole day, and what the hell!...the whole rest of the week...”

(*sigh*) “I might as well have another dessert...and another drink too...”

“Yeah, I guess you’ll just have to start over next Monday—you may as well just have fun this week!”

The result is total despair and self-disgust. Sound familiar? It’s not fun having an internal dialog like this? It sucks and it hurts like Hell! So, how can you change this kind of negative and defeating self-talk?

You *must* get positive thoughts moving in your head. You must write down what works for you and can help you be successful. Why write it down? Well, in a year from now, you may become distracted and return to some old nasty habits. Perhaps you’ll find yourself in some negative situations or challenges and resort to some old behavior.

Negative self-talk doesn’t mean that that you are not a strong intelligent person. It’s just those old tapes run-

ning in your head, arguing about what you should do or shouldn't do. When you write down your ideas and strategies for success and keep *your* journal handy to refer to every once in a while, this will ensure that you don't slide back into old self-talk and old habits.

Write in your journal what applies to you.

Keep your journal with you and read it. Adjust your journal where you need to, as things change and shift. Check out **www.o2mask.com** to see about purchasing another Operator's Manual after you fill up the first one. Review your journals so you can see how things change and the steps that you have made to help yourself in breathing easier about food!

I believe that your weight and your relationship with food are a direct reflection of what is happening inside your head. Don't kid yourself any more. Let's fix this now and stop the pain. Reach for your *Oxygen Mask* and let's move through this to the healthier, easier-breathing side of your relationship with food.

Having said that, I would encourage you to be gentle with yourself. If you need a break from your self-talk, that is OK but get right back to hearing it, and adjusting it to be positive. If you are feeling really low, you should feel confident about talking with a professional about your feelings and sharing beliefs that may not be working for you. I have. And it is nice to have someone with an objective opinion who can assist you along the way to mental and emotional stability. It's OK. It is important to be able to share the emotions that have brought you to your current state of mind with someone safe and non-judgmental. I know.

I also know that I do not have all of the answers for you. What I do know is that you have the answers for yourself. We just have to work together to figure them out. This self-discovery journaling system will guide you there. I do know that my *Oxygen Mask* system will open up your awareness about yourself.

The beginning of any journey is *awareness*. From the new insights you gain about yourself, you will begin to form some new ideas about your relationship with food. Then you can truly begin to implement new habits, attitudes and strategies that you will embrace to achieve a healthier you.

You *do* have all the answers; you just aren't aware of them all quite yet. This journey will help you discover some of the reasons behind your relationship with food. The time it takes to change ideas and routines will depend on how quickly you can make yourself aware of your own negative self-talk and how willing you are to confront it, adjust the talk to be positive, and move forward to implement healthy eating strategies.

Writing in your journal is so important, because it will go through your self-talk and some of your beliefs associated with your relationship with food. Learning about everything that you think concerning you and this relationship is the key to finding the answers for yourself.

Learning takes time. Gathering data about you will take time.

Because you will experience change as you learn from the information you gather about yourself, the journaling process will always be a work in progress. Some of your ideas about yourself will change; some will stay the same. You need to engage in this self-awareness process for your success.

Here's a point to ponder and write down right now:

What did you experience in self-talk just now as you read the words "your success"? If it was a positive feeling, great! Write that down in the space below.

If it was negative, ask yourself the next question: "What was that all about?"

Ask yourself, "What if I said that out loud with total strangers around?" or "Would I let someone else talk to me that way?" Imagine how you would feel and write it down.

When you answer these questions, you may find some deep-seated self-concepts that need adjusting, or you might just find that you have a tendency toward self-criticism. Make a decision of what you want to hear and stop beating yourself up with negative self-talk!

The *Oxygen Mask* journaling system is designed to help you see the seriousness of what you are doing to yourself, to be aware of it, to be responsible for it, to alter what you think, to challenge your old beliefs, and to develop a strategy of how to handle change and move to a healthier place. Knowing that you are the author of your own changes will be so rewarding. Later on, as you congratulate yourself on your success, you will smile at how far you've come, how much you have changed for the best.

As I have said before, this journal is a process, a journey of self-discovery. You may not get *it* right away; it will take time. You are probably saying, "Haven't I gotten it yet?" And the answer for you and others is, "Well, I am still working on all of it! I keep getting better and better for me—and for others around me." When you least expect it, something will appear right in front of you, and you will say, "The answers have been here all along, and it was so simple."



Oxygen Deprivation: Negative Self-Talk

Where are you at in maintaining your weight? Are you at the stage of just getting started? Have you just lost 10 pounds and have stopped losing? Are you trying to lose more? Are you at a standstill or plateau and need a push to get back on track to reach your goal weight? Are you at the halfway point in your weight loss? Have you reached your goal? Are you under-weight and not sure what to do? Are you unsure about eating healthy? Do you just want to have some good habits associated with food?

Perhaps you have reached a point where you are telling yourself that it is easier just not to pay attention. You might think that ignoring your weight issues is easier, but your self-talk will catch up to you sooner or later. Then we get into a negative cycle: we beat ourselves up with negative self-talk, then we overeat to compensate for the fact that we are not doing well, then we follow up the excess food with more negative self-talk. You get the picture.

At the end of the day, we're out of control. Usually, something happens that snaps us right back into reality. Logic tells us that it is better to regain self-control, break that cycle, and breathe easier about eating. This journal can be the tool to assist with all these situations. Go grab that box of tissues, a pen, your Operator's Manual, and let's get started! I will guide you along the way!

Take a deep breath...
You're about to put on
your own oxygen mask first.

Find your quiet place, block calls and interruptions for a few minutes, and then review the following questions or statements. Begin writing. If you are unsure what to write, skip the question and come back to it later and answer it.

So you want to lose weight and keep it off?

Take a moment and think about that statement.

Why is it important that you are successful?

Transfer this answer into your Operator's Manual—I will guide you.

Writing these things down again and again benefits you, because you are more likely to remember ideas and strategies through the simple act of repetition. My experience is that when people journal these intimate thoughts, then they own them.

Are you ready to be successful in losing weight and keeping it off?

In answering the previous question, did you just have a moment of self-talk? Did you ignore it or did you really notice? Write what you experienced.

You may have sheepishly said yes to losing weight and keeping it off. Why did you feel uncertain or hesitate?

You may not have an answer for the previous question. Let me tell you what I think. You doubt yourself. Self-talk has led you astray before and you are not confident that it won't happen it again! Right? You have tried a variety of things before and you have done well, but later failed! Right? Otherwise, why would you be reading this book! I am not trying to be superior or make you feel guilty, I just want you to be passionate about your own sense of empowerment, and get motivated about doing something to reach your weight goals. Our work here is to help you listen to your inner voice and change it by replacing negative words with some positive words.

Say this statement to yourself:

**“I am going to be successful
because I have a tool and a plan to help me
as I learn to breathe easier
about my relationship with food.”**

Or, if you prefer, in the space below write your own positive statement that is true for you as you begin this journal and the journey to breathe easier about food and eating.

Then take a DEEP refreshing breath and say it again!

(Now transfer this statement into your Operator's Manual)

If you just experienced some negative self-talk surrounding this statement, what was it? Write it down.

Challenge those thoughts. Underline those negative words. Now read what you've just written and ask yourself, "Would I want to say that out loud in front of other people? What is stopping me from doing that?"

You have a choice: take this seriously or stay the way you are. Yes I mean that! I am serious. I want to help, but if you are not in it for yourself, for you to be a success you need to find out why, and you need to participate. I know what I am talking about.

Remember I have helped hundreds of people, and I know what it takes. I also know what prevents people from reaching their goals and staying there. This journal is your self-discovery manual—a valuable tool to reach your weight goals. Use it.

I had one client who, no matter what I was willing to do for her, would push me away and argue with me. It didn't matter that I would make a house call on my day off to be supportive or offer practical assistance such as showing her how to reorganize her food cupboards. Nothing seemed to help. She wanted success to be handed to her. I couldn't understand how someone screaming for help could be so unwilling to do anything to achieve it.

Remember she came to me. I didn't go get her and say, “Lady you need to change some of your habits or you will be on that emotional cycle for the rest of your life. And ultimately it will shorten your life and make you a miserable person to be around.” I often wonder how she is doing. I hope she found a way to be willing to help herself and get unstuck. I stopped seeing clients after that, it was far too frustrating for me to offer so much and be pushed away—it felt like the situation with my best friend when I was 14 years old all over again.

Using the *Oxygen Mask* journaling system makes sure that neither of us in that situation because you are in control—and most of all—you *are* willing!

A close friend always encouraged me by saying, “Beth, you will be successful because you are willing—willing to be brave enough and honest enough to move forward.” I want to pass that on to you; say to yourself this affirmative statement:

I am willing, brave and honest. I *am* enough!

Isn't that nice to say! Write it in your Operator's Manual as many times as you need to—on every page if you wish.

You are willing. I am so proud and happy for you.



Programs And Diets: Working Together

Over the years, I have remained friends with many of my clients. It would surprise you how frequently they slip into the conversation some comment about being fat or embarrassed or overweight. I remember one client who would not meet with me because she had gained back the weight she'd lost; she would only connect over the phone or by email. Wow, we both felt like failures—admittedly, for different reasons. She felt she'd failed to maintain her weight loss and I felt that I hadn't adequately met her counseling needs. It was painful for both of us. This is why I wrote this book: to lessen the pain associated with our relationship with food.

Frequently, the first question people ask me is, “Which program or diet works well with the *Oxygen Mask* journaling system?”

The answer is simple. This journaling tool is something that you can use in conjunction with any nutrition or exercise program and it will enhance your efforts. No matter what program you are following, so long as it is healthy it will work with *Oxygen Mask*. Today, there are a variety of excellent programs and diets available to suit the needs and expectations of almost everyone. They vary depending on the person and the specific requirements of the individual. *Oxygen Mask* can be used with all of them.

Before starting any nutrition or exercise program, it is imperative that you check with your physician or your community health authority. If you have any health concerns, you must consult with your doctor to ensure which nutrition or exercise program is right for you. You can also consult your community health authority; ask if they offer any programs in nutrition guidance or counseling.

Some programs do all the planning and thinking and cooking for you. That kind of regimented diet is what some people need at the time. In these programs, meal planning and nutrition training come later in the program as the clients gradually stop using the prepared menu items and prepare meals for themselves. Other programs require a higher level of client involvement from the beginning, learning to plan and prepare meals. Still other diet programs use a combination of ideas and techniques with varying degrees of meal planning and nutrition training.

In my experience, no matter what a program offers, there is seldom enough emphasis on the maintenance part of the program. While clients achieve short-term gratification through weight loss or proper toning for their body, too many people think they have all the answers and leave the program with little or no support. The result: their gains in weight control quickly become regaining pounds. I know; I have seen it too many times.

There is a curious irony here. In fact, they *do* have all the answers, but memory can be short and old habits can creep back. Techniques and strategies for program maintenance can slowly begin to fail as memory fades.

Are we perfect? No. Can we catch ourselves before things go totally sideways with our weight? Absolutely! Oxygen Mask, as a self-discovery tool, helps us to memorize the techniques we have learned and to put them into practice to the point where they replace old habits. The Oxygen Mask Operator's Manual puts these healthy techniques and strategies at our fingertips at a moments notice. That's why it works. Be willing, keep journaling, be aware why and how you need to alter things, and keep your journals handy!

Here are a few questions for you to begin your journey of self-discovery. Before you begin to answer the questions, take a quiet moment to read through all of them to the end of this chapter. Monitor your self-talk; as much as possible, write down positive and affirming thoughts that you can re-read to find encouragement.

What type of program do you need right at this moment? One with all the planning and thinking and cooking done for you, or do you have the knowledge now?

What Strategies have you learned from other programs that work for you?

How will you implement these great ideas for yourself?

What are some things about some programs that will not work for you?

Transfer these ideas about what works and won't work for you into your Operator's Manual.

As you learn more about yourself, will you need a more advanced program later on? What do you envision that program looking like? For example, will you need help with more advanced meal planning? Should you raise the level of your exercise program?

Do you have any self-talk about your current program requirements? If there is, what is it?

If your self-talk needs an adjustment, how would you change it?

What are you doing to remain accountable to your program and your goals?

Remember: one day at a time and it will come together; you have the answers, I promise!

Now - *breathe!*



Exercise? Yes! The Oxygen Mask Approach

Diet and exercise. Diet and exercise. Diet *and* exercise. You've heard it over and over again—the two go hand-in-hand. For most people, weight loss or gain and weight maintenance are directly related and proportional to the amount of calories consumed versus the amount of calories expended. It's just a fact, an inescapable fact.

So, exercise? Yes! With the *Oxygen Mask* journaling system, you can make this fact a part of your self-care. Is exercise time-consuming and a chore? It can be, but shifting your perspective, exercise is also the opportunity to make the most out of being active. With *Oxygen Mask*, exercising can become a natural part of you caring for you.

Another piece of advice you've often heard which bears repeating is that before beginning any exercise program, especially if you have health issues, you must consult with your physician prior to doing any exercise. He or she can offer suggestions about the kinds of exercise that may be best you.

Why is exercise so vital to your health? Exercise is an important part of maintaining weight and weight loss. It helps to effectively burn fat and excess calories. Exercise is critical for all aspects of health—of the body, mind, and spirit. It can help with your motivation and mental attitude, promote and improve overall health, and provide cardiovascular benefits.

The type of exercise that you should be concentrating on is *aerobic* exercise. This is the form of exercise that uses oxygen very effectively. With brisk physical activity—aerobic exercise—the heart and lungs work harder to meet an increased oxygen demand. This kind of exercise promotes the circulation of oxygen through the blood supply.

Aerobic exercise involves engaging the large muscles of the body over an extended period of time. The three easy ways that you can tell if you are doing aerobic exercise are:

1. Is your heart beating faster?
2. Are you beginning to sweat?
3. Are you still able to speak clearly and carry on a conversation without gasping?

Simple way of figuring it out!

It is also important to do 30 consecutive minutes or more of aerobic exercise per day to burn fat and calories. Even doing aerobic exercise 3-5 times a week can result in significant benefits. Having said that, you should note that excessive exercise—both in time and in frequency—can be harmful, so I recommend that you do everything in moderation.

If you are just starting out, walking is a great exercise. Work your way up to 20 or 30 minutes a day. Remember my caution for moderation. You aren't going to want to do exercise if you are so stiff and sore that you hurt every time you move. So, set a first day goal to do a 10-minute walk, then the next day do 13 minutes, and then the next day increase it to 16 minutes and so on until you are doing a consistent 20-30 minutes a day, 3-5 times a week.

Another type of exercise that you can perform indoors or out is doing simple step-ups on your stairs. Step-ups are simple: face your stairs and lift your right foot the first step. Place your left foot beside your right foot on the stair. Then step down with your right foot followed by

stepping down with your left foot. Put some music on and have some fun by doing your step-ups and step-downs to the beat of the music. Do step exercise with your kids or friends. (If you are just starting out, start slow— trust me— your thighs will burn if you go like a crazy person at the beginning. I applaud your enthusiasm in wanting to move quickly, but seriously, start slowly. I want you to do it again and again without getting discouraged.)

Once you are in better shape, or want to vary your activity, you can add other simple walking activities. Some things you adjust to be more active are:

- Use the stairs more than the elevator.
- Park further away from your destination and increase your walking distance.
- Go for a walk during your coffee breaks or at lunchtime.
- Walk your pets every day or twice a day. (Fish don't count!)
- Take the laundry up the stairs in several trips.
- Make several trips carting the groceries into your home. (The goal is not to carry all the bags in with one fell swoop!)

My goal is to get you moving with simple aerobic exercise that will get your heart pumping—to make you more fit! You can choose the kind of exercise that works for you. If you already have a regular exercise routine, check that you

are not overdoing it. Also be aware that some people need a bit more food if they exercise more than the average bear! How do you know? Ask your physician to send you to a nutritionist for a consult to investigate your dietary needs with the type of exercise you are doing.

And what about those of you who are not exercising? I believe the *Oxygen Mask* journaling system can help. Often when I speak with clients about exercising, I hear excuses, vague promises to start “someday”, or negative self-talk. It’s important to deal with all these issues and one of the best ways to do that is to use the tool of self-discovery journaling. So, take out your pen and your Operator’s Manual and let’s get working on developing some positive attitudes toward exercise.

Do you have some self-talk about exercise? If so, what is it? Make a list.

If you feel this is negative self-talk, what are some positives that you can write here?

Transfer this positive self-talk into your Operator’s Manual

Here is a statement to kick-start your exercise program:

**Exercise will improve my over-all health and well being.
I now choose to increase my exercise activities.
I do this with joy and commitment.**

Transfer this statement—or write one that is personally true for you—into your Operator's Manual.

Next, make a plan.

What activities will I introduce? Beside each activity, write a time commitment: number of times you will do the activity each week and the duration you will eventually achieve.

Transfer this list into your Operator's Manual

Get your body moving! You will have more energy, more enthusiasm; you will be happier and healthier when you keep your body fit! Oh, yes—exercise will help you maintain your weight!



Goal Setting: What's In It For You?

Throughout my counseling career, when I have approached the subject of goals and setting goals, clients have repeatedly said things like, “I can’t imagine what reaching a goal will be like, I can’t see past my stomach, never mind the light at the end of the tunnel.” Some goals are just too far away for people to imagine. Now that you are getting into the swing of things, let’s get into the topic.

It is excellent to have goals—a road map of what we want to achieve. Here are a few tips for successful goal setting:

- Make the goals attainable. Perhaps define short-term goals for the time being—until you can see that proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. Why? I have seen quite a few clients set a large goal for themselves, like being a certain weight for their wedding. And when the wedding has come and gone, so has all the desire to continue striving to maintain that weight. To avoid premature abandoning of a goal, make sure that when you are getting close to attaining one goal you set a new one for the immediate future. While you’re at it, set a goal for the distant future as well. Record your goals. Update your journal as you reach a goal or need to adjust your goal.
- Goals don’t have to be about a certain number or achieving a certain weight. They can be personal goals, such as:
- Reduce your waistline so that you are able to tie your running shoes on the top by bending from your waist instead of holding your leg to the side!
- Be comfortable in your current waistband and not have it jab into your sides.

- Have the pants that are too short actually get some length to them—mysteriously! (As people lose or gain weight the pant legs don't shorten or lengthen. People just fill them out more, taking up more fabric so it appears that the pants are shorter. When you lose weight the fabric is not taken up as much, and apparently, the pants get longer.)
- Adjust your belt one notch smaller.
- Snore less.
- Get into the next smaller clothing size.

You get the picture! Make it exciting and fun! Here's a statement to write in your *Operator's Manual*:

I will make realistic, short-term and long-term goals and I will not confuse them.

My goals are manageable and will chart my success.

Transfer this statement—or write one that is personally true for you—into your Operator's Manual.

List your realistic short-term goals. Remember to list this goal: "I will fill in and faithfully use my *Oxygen Mask* journals!"

Some long-term goal ideas are:

- Fit into a certain outfit!
- Participate in a 10 KM run.
- Look great at my 10-, 25-, or 40-year reunion.
- Go on a cruise wearing a smaller swimsuit that makes you look and feel great!

You get the idea.

List your realistic long-term goals:

Why do you have these goals?

Transfer both your short- and long-term goals into the beginning and at the end of your Operator's Manual. Feel free to make a copy for your fridge too!



What's Food Doing For You?

Why we eat

The reasons why we should eat are for nourishment and for fuel; however, we eat for many, many other reasons. We eat because of what our culture tells us is right and proper behavior, and because of lessons and reasoning we learned in childhood. We eat to satisfy social expectations, out of habit, in response to emotions, for comfort, and to satisfy cravings. We eat because we are tempted by the smell, taste, texture, look, and suggestion of food. We eat to fulfill our imagination, for self-gratification or punishment, and from compulsion.

Our primary reason for eating *should* be that we are hungry, having planned our fuel intake to support for the activities for the day. This is seldom the case.

In recent decades, our society has changed dramatically with regard to activity. Whether it is physical or mental activity, life in our busy society sometimes means proper nutrition is unlikely. We are trying to cram so much into our days that physical exercise goes on the back burner. The result? If our intake of food is greater and higher in calories and fat content than necessary, and our physical activity is lower or even non-existent, the only way for our waistline to go is out!

The changing times affect all generations. In many parts of the country, our children have physical education as an option in their schools rather than as a mandatory course. Participation in sports seems to drop off in adulthood with the primary sport activity a ride in a golf cart or sitting in the stands.

Because we have such a fast-paced lifestyle today, inventors are trying to make everything easier to accomplish, so we are even less physical in what we do. At work, leaving our desk becomes prohibitive with our ties to computers; the era of the remote-controlled everything keeps us on the couch for everything from tuning electronics to dimming the lights to opening the curtains. Yet, for all the machines of convenience, we're doing more while we attend to healthy life-choices less.

All of these busy factors alter the reason for “why you eat” and the choices that you make. If you continue on this hamster wheel you will burn out. So take a DEEP breath and take some time for you! Planning your day around your activities, your food requirements, and balancing those factors with time to rest is critical. Balance! This is important for your relationship with others as well. You need to breathe easily! And that brings us back to the true reason of “why we eat”—it is for nutrition, fuel and rest—all to further the balance of our bodily needs so that we can live in good health.

When your body enjoys balance, you enjoy life—and the others in your life. This is putting your own oxygen mask on first!

Let's explore some of the ideas you have about balancing your life with your nutrition, your eating, your activities, and your rest times. Usually when we have balance in our lives we find time to do other things that we like doing.

What are some things that you would like to do for yourself to have some balance in your life?

Transfer this list into your Operator's Manual and review it often.

What will you achieve with these kinds of balances. Some ideas might be to organize your daily or weekly menu, plan your grocery shopping list, read a book, start a hobby, have a bubble bath, redecorate a room, take up yoga, schedule a daily nap, write a thank you card, plan a walking routine... and breathe.

List what you can do with balance in your life and then prioritize your list.

Transfer this list into your Operator's Manual and review it often.

Cultural expectations—how we eat

The different teachings from our cultural origins often mould our relationship with food. In the past, the expectations surrounding food consumption were more defined than they are today. People from different cultures have

various rules concerning food consumption. Where you are raised in the world, what religion you practice, can have an impact on cultural ideas such as the correct combinations of certain foods, the appropriate animals and plants that may be used for food, the importance of the people you share your table with, dining with appropriate beverages, table manners, who eats first, sharing food, which foods may be eaten with the hands and when utensils are appropriate. Cultural norms and expectations play a huge role in how you define your relationship to food.

Journaling some of the cultural norms in your life can be helpful in discovering not only what we eat, but how we eat.

Do you have any cultural expectations of how and what you eat that play a part in your relationship with food? List them.

List the ways in which you can still embrace your culture without jeopardizing your relationship with food.

Summarize your awareness of how your culture impacts your life with regard to your relationship with food and eating. Transfer this into your Operator's Manual.

Childhood lessons

Have you ever noticed that some of the self-talk that clutters up our head sounds very much like our parents, grandparents, or whomever raised us? (I can just imagine what their parents told them that was part of their self-talk.)

I remember hearing a story about a family that described how, when the grandmother cooked a roast, she would cut off one end and place the end piece in the pot beside the roast. Her daughter, the mother in this family, did the same thing. When she cooked a roast, she automatically cut off an end of the roast and put it alongside the other part of the meat. The mother then taught her daughter to do the same. One day, out of curiosity, the granddaughter asked the grandmother what the tradition of the cutting off the end of the roast was all about. “Did it have some sort of symbolic meaning?” she asked. The grandmother laughed and replied that the roast was always too big for the pot and had to be cut to fit into her roaster. The mystery was solved. It wasn’t a great piece of wisdom—it was just common sense to make the roast fit a pot!

So try to review what you learned as a child with some common sense. Remember. If you filled your plate too full, did your parent or guardian put the rest away as leftovers rather than force you into overeating? Of course, some parents threatened us with guilt. Remember this one: “If you don’t eat everything on your plate, it’ll go into the garbage and a desperately starving child in some poor country will go hungry!” The logic is so flawed that we laugh at the very idea. Yet the effect may linger on as internal self-talk.

Many sayings and mottos originated years ago, in different times and in different situations. When we hear these ideas, we need to ask where they came from and what was going on at the time. Was there a war? Was there a shortage of any food? Did people have to hide food to survive? Were there 8 children and the only way to get a mouthful was to load up your plate or you didn't get any food at all? As kids we heard:

- Clean your plate.
- Don't waste food.
- Bread and butter with every meal.
- Pasta and potatoes with every meal.
- There are starving children in the world so you have to eat all of your food.
- Always finish with a sweet dessert.
- You will not leave the table until you have finished your dinner.

What were your childhood lessons concerning food?

Do you see yourself doing some of these things in your adult life?

What do you think about portion control or overloading your plate?

What is your attitude toward leftovers and saving food?

What price do you pay for your attitudes toward food, leftovers, and scarcity/abundance issues?

Let's touch on the price that you end up paying for overeating. Obviously your health is jeopardized! What does it take to change this behavior? Suddenly you might find yourself in a health crisis that will push you from *I want to change how I eat to I have to change how I eat!* What if you were in the hospital and not able to take care of yourself or your kids or your family or your pets? Or even worse, if a health crisis would take your life? What price are you willing to pay? You decide.

Again it's about what you learned in childhood and have brought into adulthood as self-talk. What are you telling yourself about food that you learned as a child, and how can you adjust those ideas.

Use this space to journal some childhood memories about food and eating. Jog your memory and discover what fuels some of your self-talk from childhood.

How can you adjust this self-talk so that you can breathe easier about food?

Summarize these childhood lessons and the adjustment you can make in them for your adult life. Transfer this summary into the Operator's Manual.

Comfort food

Do you remember what comforted you as a child around food and eating? I remember sneaking cookie dough off of grandma's table when she was rolling out the dough before cutting the cookies. I can almost smell the bowl of chicken noodle soup that my mom or grandma gave me to help with a cold or a sore stomach. There were times when my dad took me for an ice cream to make me feel better about a soccer game that my team lost. Did you sneak turkey cuttings off the platter at the holidays like I did when my grandpa was carving the bird? I recall how I would sneak some raw pie crust off mom's counter when she wasn't looking as she rolled out the dough to make a pie. The smell of turkey and stuffing makes me think of home. The smell of apple pie makes me feel all warm inside, like a child at grandma's—safe and warm. Do you have similar recollections that associate food with comfort?

These are normal feelings. Food gives us a pay-off. It is very important to find out what your pay-off is with regard to food. Perhaps you never thought of it that way before. Again, dig deeply into your self-talk associated with your relationship with food.

When we refer to *comfort food*, what we really mean is the food that we eat to make us feel better when we feel sad or something has gone wrong in the day. It is food that will comfort us. That is what our parents, grandparents and adults in our society often thought when we were distressed: "How can I make you feel better? How about an ice cream...or chicken noodle soup...or hot chocolate?" Their attention to us often came in the form of food.

Can you remember situations where you felt soothed and comforted and ultimately loved when an adult gave you special food?

Ask yourself: are certain foods a source of comfort? Or are these “comfort foods” a source of power that comes from the fact that you are now an adult and you get to choose what and when you will eat these foods! Do you put comfort foods in a different category than other foods, even if in consuming them you know that you must pay the consequences: threaten your health, gain weight, sacrifice activities with your kids, and even shorten your life expectancy?

The pay-off for consuming what we might consider *comfort food* is perhaps more than we are willing to pay.

Ask yourself, “What are my comfort foods?”

Transfer this list into your Operator’s Manual.

What is your self-talk about food and love or approval?

If you comfort yourself with food, because of a stressful event or sadness or emotion, how do you really feel after you eat?

What can you tell yourself to adjust your self-talk?
(For example: "Food can be comforting, but love is a separate emotion. Food as comfort is OK as long as it is not in excess, and can be balanced in my daily food consumption.")

Transfer these statements into your Operator's Manual.

Temporary comfort may come from food, but when we eat *comfort foods* to excess or more frequently than we really need to, then our healthy relationship with food declines and the guilt and the negative cycle resumes. Aware of the unhealthy food choices you've made and the amount you ate can lead to negative self-talk. You become frustrated over your failure to be successful with food. That's when you begin to bargain with yourself, saying things like: "I'll just start over on Monday...or next week...or next month?" Eating comfort food usually only takes a short time to get out of control. How much damage can you do in this time?

Write about the times you have resorted to *comfort foods* and eating them got out of control.

Have you experienced the cycle of thinking you needed comfort food, then overindulging, then feeling bad about yourself, and then looking for more comfort in food? What did that look like?

Only you can stop the cycle. It requires that you be aware! Stop the cycle by developing ideas and strategies to deal with the idea that you need certain foods to comfort you in times of distress or sadness. Ask yourself: "What am I going to do the next time? Some examples might be: take a warm bath, cuddle into bed and watch a movie, or snuggle with your pet.

How can you change your self-talk? Let it begin with: I am willing, brave and honest. I *am* enough!

Breathe!

Transfer these strategies into your Operator’s Manual.

Social events

In today’s fast-paced society the phrase “work hard, play hard” seems to be the rule. It is hard to imagine a social event without food and beverages. The food industry, from grocery stores to restaurants is geared to marketing foods for every social event from baptisms to retirement parties, from Superbowls to church picnics, from private dinner parties to charity banquets. A major gathering without food? Unheard of, isn’t it? Food and eating are tailored to social events in our lives. We expect to be fed when we play hard.

In many cultures, large and small social events are not only characterized by eating, but by an abundance of food. When we attend these functions, we are expected to eat, often with total disregard for moderation or healthy choices. It’s part of socializing, part of whatever we are celebrating.

Social events are a time to think about food and about eating. It’s a time to consider our boundaries and our breathing space around the food that comes with the event. It’s a time to prepare ourselves to be conscious of what choices

we can and should make about food.

Social events are a big challenge for me! I often think to myself: “Free food...yummy. New recipes and favorites I don’t normally have! Treats!” I get all excited—for a few moments—but then I go back to strategies that I have implemented for myself. I’ll have only a taste of just one favorite, ask for the recipe, and keep the social aspects of the event as my focus. I keep my hands full so I won’t be tempted to nibble at the food. Sometimes I have a mint before I walk in the door, which will discourage me from sampling the other foods. Or I eat before I go, brush and floss my teeth, so I don’t feel like I need to eat.

I tell myself that the food is not worth the pain and struggle to get the weight off or to feel out of control. I remind myself how it feels to be in outfits that are my perfect size. I remember the moment I put them on and I feel like a million!

What are you thinking or feeling about food at a social event? For example, do you feel anxious, liberated, enticed, or fearful? Write down your ideas about food and social functions.

What is your self-talk about eating at social events?

Transfer this into the Operator’s Manual.

Sometimes something stressful happens right before the social event that could factor into your decisions. This is when you will need your Operator’s Manual the most, to remind you of the reasons to stay on track and not let someone or something affect your weight and your decisions. Keep the Operator’s Manual with you and read over your important reasons and your strategies.

Define what makes an event stressful for you and decide what it is going to take to get in control again? Your Operator’s Manual contains your positive self-talk and strategies. Remind yourself that you are writing this for you.

What are some strategies that you can implement for social events?

Transfer your strategies into the Operator’s Manual.

I always say to myself, “I am not going to let that person or that incident get the best of me and throw my eating off today! I am not giving it my power!” And I am breathing comfortably all the way!

Food habits

An eating habit is something that we have become accustomed to doing, possibly out of routine or perhaps even unconsciously. We habitually eat some foods without a lot of thought because it is just automatic behavior.

What is a habit? It may be always having potatoes with steak. Or habitually eating bacon with your eggs, or ice cream with your cake. Out of habit, you may automatically salt all your foods.

What are some of your food habits?

What can you tell yourself to ensure that these habits are healthy?

Transfer this list into your Operator's Manual.

Food rewards

Once when I was in clothing store, I overheard two people say to each other that they deserved a treat. Then they continued to discuss the sugary ice cream and pastry treat that they planned for themselves, describing the anticipated food in such detail and with such enthusiasm that I looked to see if they were drooling. I was almost drooling myself just listening to them.

Rewards don't have to be a sugary treat; it could be going out for dinner and ordering what you wouldn't normally order and then overindulging in that food as well. We can treat ourselves once in a while, but making food a reward is not a healthy habit. We need to come up with new ideas about rewards and treats for ourselves. One of the real consequences of using food as a reward is that we can pass along this bad habit to our children.

What food items or treats do you reward your family members with on a regular basis.

Write down the food rewards that you are aware of giving yourself and the circumstances that would cause you to give yourself that reward.

What can you tell yourself to ensure that these habits are healthy?

Transfer this into your Operator's Manual.

If you are in a panic thinking that you will never again have that strawberry sundae—or whatever your food reward is—as a *treat*, you are right. But, by changing your perspective and awareness you could have that sundae in your life as *food*. It won't be a monster portion and it will be purposefully planned into your day to ensure accountability for what you are eating, your self-talk will be positive because you will be in control. When you banish the notion of food as reward, you are in the position of breathing easier about your relationship with food! If you are not sure about what your food rewards are, listen to yourself over the next couple of weeks and see what comes to mind.

Of course, there are times when rewarding yourself for an achievement or an important milestone is just plain fun and well-earned. But, simply take the food aspect away from the reward. There are lots of non-food rewards; some examples are:

- a bubble bath
- a date with your significant other
- a game of golf

- a pedicure
- an hour alone with a good book
- a nap

You get the idea. Still unsure? Ask others what they do for rewards that are not food related. If you are having a hard time fitting them into your schedule, then you should come up with rewards that can be done quickly. As a bonus, the reward will often distract you from food. Choose what works for you. And Breathe!

Write down *new* rewards that you would use that are not food-related.

Transfer this list of non-food rewards into your Operator's Manual.

If you are having a hard time with this, whether it is coming up with new ideas or changing from a food to a healthy non- food reward, start by writing down some categories that best fit your lifestyle.

Suggested Categories:

1. Rewards that can be done quickly.
2. Rewards that can be done at work.
3. Rewards that are relaxing.
4. Rewards that involve others.

List the following categories that reflect what works best for you. Transfer this list into your Operator's Manual so that you have it with you when you need to refresh your reward ideas. Write down 4 to 5 rewards under each category that you think would assist in you feeling treated.

So go ahead and write down your categories for non-food rewards here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

This works! When you feel the need to reward yourself, you decide which category you need at that moment. Select the category that you think best fits into the timeline or group of people you are with. Pick a reward from that category. If you feel that you would like another reward, then continue to select another reward.

For each category write down your reward

Category 1

Category 2

Category 3

Category 4

Category 5

Category 6

Now you are equipped to adopt a new set of healthy non-food rewards for yourself and for your family as well. Pass it along!

Transfer these non-food rewards into your Operator's Manual and breathe!

What about your metabolism?

In all the years that I coached people, I ran across quite a few who did not eat all day—sometimes waiting until 8PM to have their first nourishment of the day.

When people wait until the end of the day to eat, they are messing with their metabolism. They are either not eating enough on a daily basis or then making up for it in a few days on a weekend, or they are overeating every night, because by evening they are starving!

Guess what happens to common sense planning when you are very hungry? It goes out the window. You eat a *lot* all at once—and moreover, you feel *entitled* to eat whatever you want! In this state you are unlikely to make healthy choices. This is precisely the reason that diet programs consistently warn people not to go grocery shopping when they are hungry. The tendency is to buy out the store and fill your cart with a lot of junk food and poor choices because all food looks good! Can you identify with that?

So what role does your metabolism play in why you eat?

Think of your metabolism as a fire in your body. If you put some kindling and paper on the embers, a fire will begin. If you keep adding kindling and some smaller logs you will keep your fire burning throughout the whole day.

During the night, or whenever you stop eating for a longer period of time, your body goes into a mini fast, and your metabolism and digestion will slow down until you eat again in the morning. That is when you “break the fast” from the night of not eating. Hence, the word *breakfast*.

So the sooner you eat in the morning, the longer your metabolism will be operating. The faster your metabolism starts in the morning, the more efficiently you will use the food you have eaten to fuel your body.

Your morning meal fires up your metabolism. But it is important to eat things that will not slow your metabolism. A big huge breakfast may not be wise. Instead, consider breakfast foods that you find easy to digest. After all, our digestion has to restart for the day, so make choices such as juice, yogurt, fruit, toast, and boiled egg—foods that are gentler on the stomach.

If you don't eat your first meal until later in the day, that is when your metabolism will start again. Going back to my fire analogy, if you put on a big huge log—a big meal once a day at the end of the day—it will smolder and just sit there. When leaving your food consumption until the end of the day, two things can happen: you can be so hungry that you overeat, or you are tempted to consume all your daily calories at one sitting. If you don't use that food energy right away, it gets stored as fat. And your metabolism is not working at its optimum.

If you only eat once a day your body will go into “fasting” mode, shutting down for the night and the daytime. Food is fuel for your body. You need good fuel, delivered regularly, for your brain to function properly. If you only eat once a day, either your body believes you are fasting and shuts down, or your body believes it is in starvation mode and all food gets stored as fat. Tinkering with regular eating times sabotages the way the body is supposed to operate.

Eating 5-6 smaller meals or snacks several times a day helps to keep your metabolism going. If you are not accustomed to eating this often during the day, go slowly as you adjust your meal habits. Ease into having foods several times during the day so that you don't feel like you have overdone it when you do eat. Cut back on your portions; space your meals and snacks no more than 3 hours apart. Just like those smaller pieces of wood on the fire, smaller amounts of food eaten 2-3 hours apart keep your metabolism working efficiently—and it begins at the beginning of your day with that all important meal we call breakfast.

Let's do some self-discovery journaling to find out how you approach fueling your body with food.

What is your self-talk about breakfast?

Ask yourself: Do you get an upset stomach if you eat too early? Or if you eat too much at breakfast? Remember that your body is just coming off a mini fast so it is important to start out slowly and be gentle on your stomach. The digestion is just turning on and it is slower at the beginning of the day.

What can you do to slowly introduce food in the morning?

Don't over do it; even a piece of dry toast in the morning is better than nothing. Later in the morning when you are more on the go, some whole-wheat crackers with peanut butter would be a good idea.

Here's a sample day of what eating 5-6 small meals and snacks might look like:

Breakfast Whole wheat toast with naturally sweetened jam.

Snack Whole wheat crackers with some peanut butter.

Lunch Grilled chicken on a garden salad with a balsamic vinegar dressing and a side of fresh fruit slices.

Snack Yogurt with sliced almonds and raisins.

Supper Roast beef with pasta served with a steamed veggie and a fruit cup.

Snack Celery sticks with light cheese and an apple.

(Note that I haven't put amounts beside the food items in this example. People will have different energy needs depending on their activity, age, body type, gender, metabolism, and health concerns.)

Notice I have put a protein—in this example, peanut butter, chicken, yogurt, nuts, beef, and cheese—with almost every meal. The reason is because we digest carbohydrates—fruits, vegetables, breads, crackers, raisins, pasta etc. *first*, then we digest protein. We digest fats last; in this example

fats are: some of the peanut butter, salad dressing, some sauces, butter, beef fat, cheese and yogurt. By having a carbohydrate with a protein, you receive a short-term energy stint and then have enough protein to last a few hours until the next meal or snack.

Plan out a day similar to what I have done above and document it in your journals. Here's a suggestion: Set up a template for your day like the one I have given you above and then swap out the foods each day.

For example, where I wrote *Lunch – Grilled chicken on a garden salad with a balsamic vinegar dressing and a side of fresh fruit slices*, you can replace the grilled chicken with slices of turkey or ground seasoned beef for a taco salad, or the meat with cheese. You might replace a garden salad with cucumbers and tomatoes. You could substitute a light Italian dressing or a light sour cream for the balsamic vinegar.

You get the picture! You have the template for what you are eating, just change the foods a bit. This is just a suggestion of how to start; after a while you will come up with some more ideas to have a balanced day. (Portions will depend on you as an individual and will take into account the stage you are at in your weight program or health concerns. You can check with your food guide, your diet program, your gym, your community health authority, your physician, or a local nutritionist for a more detailed guideline.)

Plan out a couple of days on your own:

DAY ONE

Food list	Approximate time
Breakfast:	
Snack:	
Lunch:	
Snack:	
Supper:	
Snack:	

DAY TWO

Food list	Approximate time
Breakfast:	
Snack:	
Lunch:	
Snack:	
Supper:	
Snack:	

DAY THREE

Food list	Approximate time
Breakfast:	
Snack:	
Lunch:	
Snack:	
Supper:	
Snack:	

Transfer this three-day meal plan into your Operator’s Manual.

It is good to have some mild hunger signs just before you are due to eat; this tells you that your metabolism is working. Everyone is different, but some common hunger signs are:

- stomach grumbling
- cold nose, hands, and feet
- slight irritability
- slower reaction to things
- reduced attention span

Drink water in between meals and snacks. Water not only fills you up, but water is very important for all aspects of your body. Water, water, water! Just like the oxygen (O₂) in your body, water (H₂O) is vital for your organs, blood, skin, electrolytes, equilibrium, and most of all, for burning fat! Breathe, breathe, breathe!

Slow down when you eat. It takes 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain that you are full. How much can you eat in 20 minutes...in 5 minutes? The answer is a lot! How to slow down? Put your fork or spoon down when you are chewing. After swallowing, pick up your utensil again and resume eating. Drink water in between mouthfuls. Take your time chewing, taste your food, appreciate the various flavors and textures, and enjoy what you are eating—mouthful by mouthful.

What are your hunger signs?

What are *you* going to do about your metabolism?

P.S. exercise can help!

What is your plan to slow down?

Write these ideas and strategies in your Operator's Manual.

*I declare you,
my support group!*





What's Eating You?

Knowing the many reasons behind what you eat and what food is doing for you was the subject of the last chapter. In this chapter, I'm going to explore some of the reasons behind why you eat. It is important to recognize that what you eat may be pushed beyond your control by a variety of factors. Beyond providing nutrition and fuel for your body, food is also connected to natural, cultural, and social ideas. Your food habits may be completely different from what your body and metabolism requires for optimum health.

People are subject to emotional upheavals, challenging situations, people, and environments that make them turn to food. For a variety of reasons, cravings and compulsive behaviors may throw off our discipline around eating. All of these factors—singularly or in combination—are real challenges that can contribute to out-of-control eating which has nothing to do with satisfying hunger or providing nourishment and energy to our bodies.

This part of your self-discovery journey may be particularly revealing, which is why I ask you to pay particular attention to journaling your insights and then transferring your positive strategies and approaches to your Operator's Manual.

Emotional eating

Deep feelings surround many of our moods: stress, anger, fatigue, hunger, boredom, sadness, anxiety, anticipation, excitement, depression, and elation. We all experience powerful feelings that can trigger emotional eating. What I mean by emotional eating is characterized by an out-of-control eating event that is used to combat, comfort or mask emotions that challenge our sense of well-being.

Put simply, emotional eating is feeding your feelings not your stomach. When you eat to satisfy something more than hunger, you are engaged in numbing pain or distress. Some of these behaviors can become pathological—producing such eating disorders as anorexia and bulimia—but that is not my focus. Rather, let's explore some of the common causes that most people experience with emotional eating.

Emotions produce different reactions in people, but stress seems to be the most common factor in poor eating. Stress can be expressed in a variety of emotions and result in many negative behaviors around food. Emotional eating can become your biggest challenge and even sabotage your weight loss efforts, so it is vital that you become aware of not only what you are eating, but also why you are eating. Once you can see what is going on with your emotions and relate that to your behavior, you can adjust what you are doing and overcome eating to satisfy uncomfortable feelings.

We all resort to eating for emotional reasons, but when this becomes a main focus of our lives, that's when the trouble begins—we experience pain, struggles, frustration and ultimately, weight gain. I had personal challenges with emotional eating: not caring what I ate when I got upset, angry or sad; eating out of boredom or procrastination. I ate when I was stressed. Awareness and making a plan helped me get out of the emotional eating rut. I believe these two techniques can help you too, so breathe! Let's work on a plan!

When I have emotions that could lead me to eat uncontrollably, I implement the following:

- Plan ahead for shopping for groceries for healthy meals.
- Plan to make extra foods ahead of time that can be frozen.
- Plan snacks that have some variety.
- Check my self-talk and adjust it to be positive.
- Use my distraction techniques keep busy.
- Eat small meals and snack 5-6 times a day.
- Slow down as I eat.
- Drink lots of water, water, water!
- Give myself permission to have some treats in very small quantities and then adjust my daily food intake: practice moderation rather than elimination.

Emotion distraction technique

Feelings can be so strong that we really don't care about our healthy goals anymore. It is important to have a plan in place for when this happens, so have your Operator's Manual handy at all times. We don't plan these emotions, they just occur at the most inconvenient times. Any event can be spoiled with an emotion that pushes you over the edge; extreme emotion can drive you to make unhealthy food choices.

What you need is something to take your mind off of the emotions or stress until you can calm down a bit and make good food decisions. Learning how to control your reactions to highly charged feelings—whether it's happiness, sadness, or boredom—and combining that control with moderation in your eating impulses will help you avoid emotional eating. During times when emotions prompt you to eat or even overeat, ask yourself, "What is my purpose for wanting to eat healthy?" This will help keep you motivated.

Different programs offer a variety of strategies for averting emotional eating. The strategy that has been very successful for my clients has been a distraction technique.

Emotional distraction technique begins with awareness. First, list below the categories of distractions that could keep you from emotional eating. Secondly, write down activities that correspond with the category that you think would assist in distracting you from overeating as a response to emotional stress. Try to come up with 4 to 5 *really good* activities per category that you would actually engage in. Keep in mind that if the activity is not attractive to you, what is the likelihood that you will increase your emotional eating? Keep it real for you!

Suggested categories distractions:

1. Things that can be done quickly anywhere.
2. Your meltdown distraction (which totally takes your mind off of food).
3. Things I can do while dressed up.
4. Things that are relaxing.
5. Things I can do with others or with others present.

Some examples of something that could be done quickly anywhere are:

- Get the car washed
- Call a friend
- Organize your day-timer or balance the checkbook
- Make arrangements for an upcoming event
- Book a hair appointment
- Document your self-talk in your Operator's Manual

Some examples of a meltdown activity done anywhere would be:

- Begin a craft project
- Call your support person(s)
- Organize a family garage sale
- Repot your houseplants
- Plan your child's birthday party
- Go to the gym
- Get a manicure
- Attend a sporting event

Write down six categories that will fit into your life:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

For each category write down a corresponding activity:

Category 1

Category 2

Category 3

Category 4

Category 5

Category 6

This distraction technique works. When you are having an emotional challenge, you decide which category you need at that moment. Select one of the activities in the category that fits the situation and do that activity. If you need more distraction, then select another activity from that category. (Just think how much you will accomplish in your life when you are not doing emotional eating!)

Distraction techniques take your mind away from food and permit you to get on to bigger and better things. This encourages you to make better decisions and to feel good about having that power. It also allows you to breathe easily in your relationship with food because you consciously think about the situation, are aware of your self-talk concerning your emotions, can alter the self-talk if it is negative, and make a wise choice by avoiding food or giving yourself permission for moderation. You finish with control over your food intake and with a plan for the day.

The next step is to transfer your distraction categories into your Operator's Manual. Leave space to record new distractions as ideas emerge for you. Take your Operator's Manual with you at all times, because we don't plan these emotional triggers and the distraction solutions you need will be at your fingertips. That way you stay on track regardless of the time or place.

If you are finding that emotional eating is a big challenge at the moment, here is a more intense method of increasing your awareness and using distraction techniques. I call it the envelope method and have found it very effective.

Refer to the categories you have identified and list each one on the front of separate envelopes. Take pieces of paper that will fit into the envelopes and write down one distraction activity per piece of paper. Place that distraction activity in the category envelope that corresponds with the activity. Carry these envelopes with you to help you get through emotional eating events; this is probably the most important time that these distractions work for you.

I have used this envelope method with a variety of personal challenges. It works! Eventually you will move from the envelopes to your Operator's Manual. And eventually you will be doing a distracting activity automatically when an emotional eating event comes around. You know that you have the envelopes or your Operator's Manual to guide you—written by *you* for you—helping you breathe easier about your relationship with food!

Better yet, place an extra copy in the fridge or cupboards to help keep you on track!

Here are some additional self-discovery questions to help you with emotional eating:

What are your strategies to help with emotional highs and lows?

What foods do you always resort to for emotional eating? (List quantities.)

What strategies can you use to practice “moderation, not elimination” of some foods?

Transfer these ideas into your Operator’s Manual.

Emotional eating and your plan for success

Think back to all of the topics we have gone over and what ideas your self-discovery journaling has shown to work for you. In this section, we will continue to explore strategies for avoiding the pitfalls of emotional eating. This is critical, for we all have a tendency to abandon our plans when strong emotions guide our brains. Sometimes we are so stressed or upset we don't even know what we are eating or how much. Internally we are stuck in negative self-talk which produces more powerful emotions such as anger and guilt. The feeling of losing control can spiral us into more destructive emotional eating; we can feel defeated, cheated and mistreated—by ourselves.

What's the solution for avoiding the damage of emotional eating? Plan! When you are aware of what emotional eating can do, you can plan how to avoid it.

Let me give you a personal example that most women and men can relate to.

Pre-menstrual Stress (PMS) times are difficult for many women. PMS can bring on distressful feelings and cause sufferers to resort to emotional eating episodes. This used to happen to me, but through self-awareness I have been able to get through these unavoidably stressful times with one simple strategy. Here's my story:

I had times of being fatigued and experiencing uncomfortable feelings due to PMS. In response to the fatigue, I decided to add one carbohydrate to my daily meal plan—usually a piece of bread—during the days that demanded more energy. I allowed myself that one piece of bread and enjoyed it rather than slip into the attitude of “avoid, avoid,

avoid!...Attack! Devour and destroy; take no prisoners!" You know the drill: eating more than you planned, feeling guilty and finding another 5-10 lbs are added to your body.

Instead, I had the one extra carbohydrate per day and maintained moderation while giving myself permission to add it. I didn't feel tempted toward emotional eating; I didn't use self-talk such as, "Oh, just one more carb won't hurt." I was aware and careful. I had a plan.

My plan was to pre-portion what I needed, knowing it is safer that way. When I wanted cheese and crackers, I put out 3 crackers on a plate and cut 3 pieces of light cheese. Then before I began to eat, I put the cheese and the cracker box away. I sat, ate and enjoyed the snack...slowly. I appreciated that while I was busy in my brain, I could also have a very busy hand stuffing my mouth with food to the point of overeating. Awareness kept me from eating to satisfy my feelings of emotional upheaval. As I felt more in control, my emotional battle subsided.

Sometimes, as another strategy for the evening, I simply went to bed, and by the next day the feelings associated with PMS had dissipated. I put a hot water bottle in the bed—it worked like a charm to calm me down and get me sleepy. The next day, I had a new outlook. And then I took another deep breath! I was once again in control and loving it!

Here's another example that both men and women can relate to—binge eating.

Home alone—that's probably where we do the most damage to our eating plans and ourselves. When we are by ourselves, and in our own homes we give ourselves permission to eat in secret.

I know this from experience; when I have engaged in binge eating, it has been in my home away from any other witnesses. I felt pretty silly because I was acting like a kid, hiding from everyone. It is sad when people feel compelled to binge eat, but it happens and is so damaging to our self-esteem and to our success. And afterwards? The guilt, embarrassment, depression, and self-justification that appears in our self-talk isn't very pretty, is it?

Perhaps, with our fast-paced lifestyles, we binge even more in the privacy of our own vehicles. Fast food contributes to the problem, but it's not solely the blame for sabotaging our best eating intentions. For example, after picking up the groceries we're often alone, and in the privacy of our vehicles we indulge in eating whatever we want. Secret eating is the problem.

Binge eating can lead to bulimia nervosa, an eating disorder for which there is no single identifiable cause. Depression, dieting, poor coping skills, and even genetics may be implicated in binge eating. Characterized by secret and rapid eating to the point of being uncomfortably full, binge eaters eat alone and often when they aren't hungry. Remorse and embarrassment sometimes causes bulimics to purge their bodies of unwanted food by vomiting or by using laxatives.

If you are a binge eater, what are you telling yourself? "It doesn't matter anymore—I am a failure when it comes food." If you say this, then guess what...it will come true.

Binge eating is emotional eating—are you either habitually or occasionally a binge eater? Describe your bouts with binge eating—when are you most likely to binge and where?

When are you most likely to binge eat or eat in secret and then feel embarrassed for having done so? Can you describe other feelings you have around binge eating?

What is some of your self-talk around secret or binge eating?

What positive self-talk can you say to yourself to keep you from lapsing into binge eating?

If binge eating becomes chronic in your life, and you suspect or have been told that you have this eating disorder, you should seek help from a health care provider: a psychiatrist, psychologist or a physician. There are many treatments for bulimia nervosa...I urge you to find them.

If you do have an emotional eating episode—because it will happen as it happens to all of us—you can handle it positively if you take some time, examine the situation, and forgive yourself for making a poor food choice. It is so important that when you realize that you made an honest mistake, or even just simply chose to eat food to help you get over bad or intense feelings, you need to be realistic and look at your self-talk associated with that event. Hear what you are saying to yourself and adjust if it is negative. Acknowledge to yourself that you made the decision to have that food and that you will adjust your daily food intake to be on track with your energy needs. Say to yourself, “This isn’t exactly how I had planned my day, but I will adjust things for the next time and learn from this experience.”

Every time a challenge comes up, write it down in your journal. And move on. One episode is no big deal; it’s a bump in the road, just like we encounter throughout life! This shift in attitude is important because by being sincere and positive, you’ve maintained your personal power. Wow, such power! You’ve achieved another way to breathe easier about your relationship with food!

Here are some journaling questions to help you.

Write down what you did that was so successful when you curbed an emotional eating episode! And revisit this strategy again, because emotional eating may happen again.

Even if you had a problem episode, think of what it was like compared to the past? Was the outcome worse or better?

What can you do better the next time you are challenged by emotional eating and how can you learn from this?

Ask yourself, “What was my self-talk? How can I adjust it for the next challenge? What did I learn about myself?”

“What other strategies can I come up with?”

Transfer these ideas into your Operator’s Manual.

Some of the stress associated with emotional eating is our personal assessment of our appearance, our weight, and the progress we have made in reaching our weight goals. The feelings surrounding these issues can lead to negative perceptions about ourselves.

Take a moment and think of how you feel/felt at your heaviest weight. Remember:

- What did your clothing feel like?
- What is it like to walk up 5 flights of stairs? Would you make it?
- Even without physical activity, what was your breathing like at rest?
- Did you snore?
- What was it like to tie your shoes?
- Could you touch your toes?
- Could you see your feet?
- How did people look at you? Did anyone make comments?
- Has your weight affected your job? Life? Family? Activities with your family? Intimacy?
- How much do you consume in food and alcohol daily?
- How much weight have you gained?

- How does it feel to be this weight?

Now *feel* these emotions! Sit in them and acknowledge the feelings. Write them down and remember.

I remember why I am doing this. These are the emotions that brought me to this place of self-discovery:

Work with me. I won't keep you here, but you need to remember so that you will not go back to this place of negative emotions.

Write down what this place is or was like:

Now, tell me what your goal is? Tell me what you think being lighter in weight or healthy weight will be like?

Have you been there before? Then you know what it feels like! You can visualize what reaching your goal will mean.

What is it going to be like to slip into a smaller size of jeans— feel totally comfortable, slim and trim? Imagine the feeling of your skin being tight and healthy, nourished with moisture. Imagine your legs being more fit and toned than they have ever been! Visualize yourself in a slimming bathing suit at your goal weight with a golden glow all over your body. Picture your body on the beach and being comfortable in your skin. You can touch your toes, you can tuck your knees up to your chest and you feel great. You have energy to spare! You can do 5 flights of stairs with ease and still want to do more! You do not snore anymore. You sleep so rested and full of energy you bounce out of bed with a spring and a smile for the day.

You notice your goal outfit is getting too big for you because you are toning your body and feel so fit. You are planning your day's food with ease and fun. You have such great self-esteem and positive self-talk that you know you can do anything you put your mind to. You are determined and you have all of your power! You are great! And you have a healthy body at your goal weight! Can you appreciate what *Oxygen Mask* is doing for you?

Write down how you feel at a healthy weight? What does healthy feel like?

So you *do* have choice, you just need to feel the difference! Which do you prefer? Why?

Enjoy the ride along the way to your goals and be yourself. Have some fun! Breathe! Know what it is like to have an easy relationship with food! Remember that you are putting your own oxygen mask on first so that you are healthy and able to be there for those you love. Take these ideas into the next topics!

Challenging situations—challenging people

In life we come across situations and people that can throw us for a loop! Have you encountered a situation or an environment where you didn't feel comfortable, but had to remain where you were?

For example, put yourself into this scene: a good friend has invited you to a party. You arrive and are having a good time, when your ex-fiancé walks in the door with his or her new date. Yikes! The atmosphere suddenly becomes charged. You feel uncomfortable and awkward. This situation with these particular people could send even the most secure person into a food or alcohol frenzy.

Heightened emotions and stress will make us “deal” with the situation the best that we can, often coping or comforting ourselves with food and/or drink. The “cure” for our distress may seem almost automatic; we want desperately to do something to make us feel better. But, in the long run, all that we achieve is that we've sabotaged our calorie intake for the day. Depending on the level of emotions and pain, the sabotage can last for some time.

While it is true that we have emotions associated with awkward situations, we should not allow them to destroy our goals and our plan for healthy living. Emotional reactions are normal and they alert us to our options for action. You can experience the emotional response, acknowledge that you have the emotion, and then make sure you deal with it in a healthy manner. You can also acknowledge that in time the distress that caused your emotional response will dissipate and you will begin to heal. (This is where support is a key for your success. I will address this in the Chapter Eleven on Support Systems.)

Just as we find ourselves in challenging situations with our relationship to food, there are also challenging people that can push us over the edge. Perhaps you know people who get upset when you don't eat all of a meal they have prepared for you. Their response is to 'push' food on you, and your response may be to overeat. Another challenging person is someone who punches your buttons or antagonizes or stresses you to the extent that you are so upset that you decide the only solution is to cope by eating or drinking.

Food 'Pushers' can be relentless and you can develop strategies to deal with them. You have to tell them politely, "No thank you," and mean it. If necessary, you can add that you have been instructed to watch what you are eating for health reasons. Call your hosts in advance. Be open about saying that you have a meal plan for the day and you know the meal that they are offering does not fit your plan. You could offer to bring your own food, accept their substitutions, or plan to arrive after dinner. Limit your time there and have an out. Stick to your guns; decide you are not going to be forced to eat what is not in your plan. Consult your strategies in your Operator's Manual before you go, have a mental positive plan, and be strong. Remember, by putting your own oxygen mask on first, you are better able to care for yourself and then care for others.

The same goes for the people in your life who keep pushing your buttons. Try to limit your time with them. If those people are jokesters, smile and laugh with them. Try not to take them too seriously. If they are offensive, politely tell them so, and then make a graceful exit. Read your journal ahead of time and have a plan. Ask yourself if you *have* to spend time with these people? Be strong and don't let anyone ruin your day or your health! Don't let anyone affect how you eat. Breathe!

Here are some self-discovery questions that may help you illuminate the strategies you need to develop for coping with challenging situations and challenging people:

What situations challenge you and may cause you to turn to food or alcohol to cope?

List some strategies that you have come up with to ease the challenge of certain situations:

Transfer these ideas into your Operator’s Manual.

What challenging people are likely to come into your life?

What strategies can you come up with for dealing with these challenging people?

Transfer these ideas into your Operator's Manual.

Sometimes a variety of factors can come together quite unpredictably and throw us off our eating plan. We encounter certain people in an unexpected situation and, suddenly, we're stressed and an emotional eating or drinking episode is suddenly on our horizon. You are probably nodding because you have an idea of the person, place, emotion and food that might combine to cause you instant distress!

Being aware of these challenges and how they might arise is really important. For example, can you imagine a situation that is normally fine, but with the addition of a challenging co-worker or the onset of a sad day, your response to food could become a disaster? Don't let it be. Anticipate these combinations of factors; try to avoid those situations, people and negative self-talk until you have a plan! Your *Oxygen Mask* journal of self-discovery is just the tool for you to design strategies that work for you. Start here, and

then transfer what you write into your Operator’s Manual:

List a combination of situations/events/people that would not be good together.

Tell yourself, “There is no way that I am going to let anything get in my way!” Say it out loud! Say it again, louder! Breathe! Tell yourself that you are going to be a great success! You are going to eat healthy! You are determined to maintain your goals! You are going to be successful! You can do it! Tell yourself you have a plan and you are going to do great! Remind yourself of your own goals and say out loud, “Food does not taste as good as my success feels!”

What is your plan for dealing with that certain challenging person or people?

What is your plan with dealing with that difficult situation or event/events?

What is your plan if a combination of these stresses comes together?

If you are unsure what to write in these spaces, go back to emotional eating strategies and you will find some answers there.

Remember to transfer these ideas and strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Cravings and compulsions

Having a craving and being hungry are very different. A craving is that nagging feeling of wanting a certain food item or a particular taste in your mouth. Sometimes our imagination will work overtime to focus on that food and then we can end up desiring that food all day!

Cravings for food can emerge at anytime. Cravings are not always negative—they can signal our bodies' deficiencies in

certain minerals, vitamins, or enzymes; they may be related to our nutritional needs, or they may alert us to certain hormonal imbalances, adrenal fatigue, or even insulin resistance. All food cravings, however, can become a negative in our overall health when we respond inappropriately to them. The result is that we damage our metabolism, increase weight gain, and endanger our health.

You should consult a qualified nutritionist and/or your doctor if you have concerns about cravings and the effect they have on your metabolism. What I want to discuss here are some strategies for coping with and eliminating common cravings.

There are two important ideas about cravings. First, they have nothing to do with will power. Secondly, we need to pay attention to what foods we crave and how we respond to them. Here are some strategies to help you recognize and deal with food cravings:

Foods that have a strong flavor may cause you to crave another food. For example, tomato sauce, cream sauce, or spicy foods containing garlic may cause you to crave a sweet food. This is because your palate and tongue are full of taste receptors; the strong flavored food may have a lingering taste and you need to cleanse your palate to get over it. Eating grapes, apples, watermelon, and cucumber can help to do this. You will be quite surprised by the results. Other non-food alternatives are to try a tongue scraper to get rid of the taste, or brush your teeth or chew some gum.

Some other cravings are about texture. You may crave crispy or crunchy food; you may crave soft or smooth foods. If the texture of a food is more important to you than the calorie count, then you can opt for cooking meth-

ods that will provide the desired texture *and* still be a healthy alternative.

For example, if you crave the crunch of tortilla chips, which are high in carbohydrates, salt and fat, opt instead for baked pita bread. Cut the round bread into bite-size triangles and bake or grill for a couple of minutes on a cookie sheet. This dries out the pita and makes it crispy—and it becomes a satisfying substitute. You could add some spices to alter the flavor, but watch salty spices such as garlic salt, onion salt, or seasoning salt.

If you crave creamy textures, try some of the new yogurts on the market. Read the labels for the sugar content; watch the artificial sweeteners too. Some yogurts have less fat. Plain yogurt can be used in cooking and in combination with fresh fruits and vegetables. As the foundation for fruit smoothies, plain yogurt is unbeatable. Mixing fruit and yogurt helps to sweeten the yogurt naturally because of the fructose or natural sugars found in fruit.

Try freezing fruits such as pineapple chunks, grapes, mandarins, and blueberries. Mixed with yogurt, they are a wonderful substitute for ice cream. Eaten by themselves these frozen fruits also will help cleanse the palate.

Some people find they have a craving for salt. If your diet is too high in sodium or salt it can affect your blood pressure, your cardiac condition (heart), as well as affect your body's water retention and circulation. If you already have challenges in these areas, you should have guidance from your physician and a nutritionist. If it has been over a year since you had a review of what foods and quantities of sodium are in your diet, you need a review! Yes you do! It is for your life!

It is wise to be aware of foods high in sodium even if you are healthy. Processed foods can be higher in sodium because of the way that these foods are made to give them a longer shelf life. Examples are processed meats, canned veggies, canned soups, sauces, package seasonings, cheeses, prepackaged meals, pickles, cured hams, canned tuna, bacon, cold cuts, chips, crackers, and much more. Read the labels and look

for sodium in the ingredients. There are some low sodium products on the market; be sure to also check those read those labels.

Some people crave artificial sweeteners. Some of these are made from altered amino acids—an altered amino acid is a protein building block whose molecular structure has been changed. The fact is, we have given sugar a bad rap! Sugar is OK in moderation—when we don’t overindulge in it! If this sounds scary, it is. I am very allergic to any artificial sweeteners and, as a nutrition counselor, I am fearful about what artificial sweeteners are doing to the bodies of people who overindulge in them. Any ingredient with ‘ose’ or sometimes ‘ol’ at the end of the word has some qualities of sugar. Read your ingredients labels. Similarly, “edible oil” products are nutritionally bankrupt. I have a hard time with those as well. When we opt for artificial anything, take it as a symbol that we are tampering with our nutrition for sake of achieving a certain taste. Just because artificial is deemed safe, you really need to think about this one.

For further information about sodium, sugars and artificial sweeteners, see Chapter Nine: *Home: Strategies for Food Renovations* and the section about reading food labels where I provide more details.

Awareness is the key to dealing with cravings and finding the origins of them. We need to ask ourselves if we crave certain foods, certain textures, or certain tastes. To curb dangerous cravings may be as simple as using different preparation or cooking techniques, substituting different foods, or eating what we crave in moderation. If cravings become overwhelming, then you should always consult a health professional. To help your awareness of your cravings, here are some journaling questions:

What are the some foods, textures or tastes you crave?

Do you know why you crave them? Write your answers in detail.

What are some nutritional foods you can choose to cleanse your palate?

What are some possible substitutes for the food, textures and tastes that you crave?

Researching and asking friends about their cravings may produce viable substitutes for your cravings; write them down here:

What have you decided about salt or artificial sweeteners?

Transfer your responses into your Operator's Manual.

Sensory traps: smell, taste, texture, look, suggestion

Before we even eat food, we are subject to a variety of stimuli that can make us want food. We can smell food and see it and be tantalized by it. We can imagine the texture of certain foods—their crunchiness or their smoothness attracts us. Just the memory of the taste of a food from the last time we ate it can be a strong stimulus. Even someone else talking about food can send us into feelings of desire.

I will never forget how, after counseling about 16 people one day, I went home craving shrimp and strawberries. Two of my clients had talked about those foods that day. It was a very odd suggestion to crave them together, but that was all it took for me to want shrimp and strawberries.

I lived behind a bakery and every morning, with the aroma coming from that place, I craved donuts! I was almost drooling as I got into my car. Usually, when I drove away, the craving passed, but I will always remember the power of those aromas. The smell of barbequed meat does the same thing for me.

I always loved the way that bakery items looked so delicious, but when I ate them, it wasn't as good as I had imagined. So I stopped buying them. Now I can simply look at them, remember my disappointment in how they taste, and I don't need to eat them.

The texture of some foods—crunchy, smooth, or grainy—is enough to lure us into eating them. I used to enjoy a certain mousse yogurt because of its bubbly texture. The texture was so important to me that if the yogurt mousse was bumped or dropped so the air bubbles left it, it just wasn't the same and I wasn't as interested in eating it. I feel a simi-

lar disappointment when I imagine corn chips being soft or stale. Some people like the textures more than they like the taste of crunchy food. I like the crunch of croutons in a salad, but put them in the fridge and they become unappealing—just soggy, seasoned bits of bread.

Let your senses guide you to *ideas* about food appeal, but be aware of what it is—*only an idea*, not a suggestion to rush to eat. Let the smell just be that, a smell. Let the sight be just a nice view. Satisfy your desire for something sweet with fresh fruit. Frozen pineapple chunks work for me every time. When you need food with crunch, try fresh veggie sticks or make your own baked pita chips. Explore other seasonings besides salt to flavor your foods. Above all, evaluate your cravings within the context of your day's food plan. If you must give in to a craving, make it a healthy choice!

Looking for a complete sensory food experience? Have an orange. You cut into the peel with a knife and the juice sprays lightly on your lips and you lick your lips and taste the sweet orange spray. Peel away all the rind and divide the fruit into the sections. Bite into a piece and experience the fresh orange juice as it splashes your taste buds. It is so cold and sweet on your tongue. Each bit is so juicy that it drips down on your hand and onto your plate. Nice, isn't it!

Write down how smell, texture, taste and suggestion have got you into food trouble in the past.

What is your self-talk about those senses?

Accepting my suggestion that you can appreciate the sensual nature of food without acting on this stimulus, what changes are you going to make when your senses tempt you to eat?

Transfer these ideas into your Operator's Manual.

Self-gratification lapses

The act of satisfying your own sense of pleasure and giving into your food desires can threaten your daily food plan. Do you live dangerously by eating what you perceive as forbidden foods? You might have a chuckle at this now, but really dig into the idea! As adults, are we acting out what our parents or the adults in our lives told us was forbidden or unwise to consume?

Are we being childish? Or shall I say childlike? What does it do for us to eat or even overindulge in these foods? For example, I loved hot fresh bakery buns as a child, but was told, “No, you can’t eat the whole bag!” Then as an adult, I took a secret pleasure in consuming a whole bag of those buns? Most adults wouldn’t consider this a prudent or wise choice, but I’ve done it! And I know that many of my clients have done it or something similar. Are we doing this out of spite? Or just because we are adults and we can make these choices if we chose to? Do you believe in self-gratification when it comes to food?

Here’s a crucial question that will give you the answer: “Would you do this behavior publicly in front of others?”

What do you do if you have a self-gratification lapse? Here’s a story to illustrate what I did. One day, I ordered four slices of a lemon poppy seed loaf to take home. In the bakery, I asked for a lot of napkins, indicating that the four slices would be shared by a group of people. The truth was that I was too embarrassed to admit that I might eat 2 or 3 of these slices in one sitting—in private, of course. And, I did just that. The slices were delicious; I tasted every bite!

How did the rest of my day unfold? I realized I indulged in 3 slices and decided that I would skip lunch to stay on track, then have a light snack before dinner, and then have a light dinner. Do I recommend this as a good habit? Absolutely not! But if a self-gratification lapse does happen, just incorporate it into your day’s food plan. Next time plan better: only have one piece and then immediately freeze the rest. Adjust your lunch or the rest of the day for food consumption—and move on!

If I weren't comfortable enough with my decisions to do this, I would not even have gone to the coffee shop that sells the loaf. I would not linger over the showcase of treats; I would focus on my companions and our conversation. If my companions were part of my support group, I would say to them, "My plan is that under no circumstances am I to leave with a couple of slices of lemon poppy seed loaf."

What are some foods that may cause a self-gratification lapse in your food plan?

Why do you think that happens?

What could you do differently to avoid self-gratification lapses? (How would your self-talk sound?)

Transfer these ideas into your Operator's Manual.

Self-abuse and food

What do you think of when you eat? This is a different question, directed at those who think of harming themselves with food or by going without food. This topic of self-abuse might be where your self-talk is very deep and you are not aware of what is going on inside. Here are some probing questions that may show you if you are abusing food:

- Are you overeating to be noticed?
- Are you under-eating so that someone will notice?
- Are you trying to get back at someone?
- Do you feel like you do not deserve to be healthy?
- Have you overeaten or binged on foods so much that you have made yourself sick?
- Have you used food to make yourself sick on purpose?
- Are you overeating because you feel safer if you are not noticed—especially noticed in a sexual manner?

I remember finding out that I was doing something sub-consciously to hurt someone in my past with the choices I made for myself. In actual fact, I was hurting myself and ruining my life because of it. That was a big eye opener! When I figured that one out, I was in shock for days, then weeks, and ultimately for almost a year.

After I was out of shock, I was aware of what I was doing, yet I kept abusing myself out of habit. It was more painful and frustrating to be aware of this harmful habit. I sought advice from a professional, worked on it like a job, and now I understand my motivations and my choices so that I no longer harm myself. All is fine now, but can you imagine if I had not figured it out? It was because I was brave enough to be willing to confront my reasons for self-abusing! So take courage; you can do this!

If any of the above questions resonated with you, here are some questions for your self-discovery journal that may help you honestly probe your relationship with food and self-abuse.

Can you identify a self-abusive habit you associate with food? Be honest and specific.

Tell me more:

What are you telling yourself? Pay particular attention to your self-talk and write it down here:

Are you abusing food to numb a pain? Describe this feeling:

Tell me more.

How can you change your self-talk to be positive?

Transfer these positive self-talk statements into your Operator's Manual.

This issue may take more time and journaling space than I've provided. It is important to keep working on this! If you feel you need some professional assistance in this area, you are making a very wise decision. I made that choice, and it was one of the most important things I ever did for myself. It was truly putting my own oxygen mask on first, and I emerged a healthier person for it. You can do it!

Compulsive eating

Compulsive eating is overeating and doing it uncontrollably, without being able to stop. Compulsive eaters are not necessarily aware of what they are doing. This is more than just eating an entire bag of hot fresh bakery buns in an occasional lapse. This kind of eating happens on a regular basis.

If you think that you are eating compulsively you have at least taken the first step—you're moving toward being aware! That is great. The next step is figuring out why you engage in this behavior, what causes you to do it, and then to put together some action steps in a plan to stop your compulsive eating. Sounds easy? It can be, if you are willing to confront the behavior and take steps to eliminate it.

If you believe that you have an issue with compulsive eating, I recommend filling out a food diary in a separate notebook to see what you are consuming. If you don't write down everything, you are cheating yourself! Time to take the Oxygen Mask metaphor to heart. You need to take care of yourself first so that you can be available to others as a fit and able individual.

There are some tough questions to ask about compulsive eating and they may require some tough introspection. Here are some preliminary questions to think about before you journal:

- What do you feel when you eat compulsively?
- What is at the root of the why you eat this way? (To numb whatever is going on inside?)
- What emotions do you experience when you are eating compulsively?

Examine your self-talk—there are lots of clues there. You may feel embarrassed to admit what you eat, but you can see it on the outside of your body, can't you? You are willing to read this, so you must willing to ask yourself, "Why?"

Look deep inside for what you are telling yourself about your compulsive eating behavior. Take your time and listen to what you say to yourself.

What is your self-talk around your compulsive eating behavior?

As you think about it, write more.

What is your payoff for compulsive overeating?

How do you want to change this?

How do you feel about the prospect of changing this behavior?

How can you change your self-talk to be positive?

Remember: you are willing, and you deserve to live a healthy life! Tell me more about what you are going to do to change your compulsion to eat uncontrollably.

What strategies from emotional eating and all the areas of this book can you implement?

Transfer these positive self-talk statements and strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Have you noticed why you eat certain foods?

Can you find some new food ideas that may help curb your compulsive eating habit? What are they?

What positive statements will you tell yourself from now on? Have you written these thoughts on a sticky note and placed it on your mirror at home? Well put it there!

Transfer these positive self-talk statements and strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Moderation violations: alcohol, drugs, smoking

We should be eating out of a need for fuel and nutrition. Who thinks of that anymore? Not many. There are certain non-food items that we consume that can critically affect the way we eat and what we eat. Some, when done without moderation, pose huge health risks for most people, including the risk of addiction. In particular, I'm referring to the use of alcohol, drugs, and smoking.

Alcohol

Alcohol is high in calories, it can numb our emotions and our decisions, and it can make us not care about what we eat and why we eat. When it comes to making a decision about hard versus soft liquor or wine versus hi-balls, you only need to remember all alcoholic beverages are high in calories.

There is a reason that most diet professionals refer to alcoholic drinks as "empty calories." They provide little in the way of nutrition but are almost as high in calories as fat. Alcohol is used by our bodies more rapidly than fat or protein and is stored quickly as fat. One drink averages over 100 calories. In a night out, without moderation, you easily could drink your day's energy needs in alcohol!

If you are overdoing the alcohol in your diet you need to ask yourself *why*? Go back to compulsion section and working through those pages, replace the word food with alcohol and see if there are some answers there.

If you suspect that you are addicted to alcohol, then seek the help of a professional; don't hesitate to contact Alcohol Anonymous—they're in every phone book and in every city. Their website is www.aa.org.

Here are a few more questions to get to the reason you may find yourself using alcoholic drinks without moderation:

Are you using alcohol to numb your feelings about yourself or others?

What is your self-talk around your use of alcohol?

What strategies can you use to keep your use of alcohol moderate or eliminate it?

If you feel that you might be caught off guard at a social event where you know alcohol will be served and don't have a plan ahead of time, then simply don't go. That's fairly extreme, so here are some strategies for avoiding alcoholic drinks that I have recommended to my clients:

At parties or in the bar, have a low calorie drink in your hand at all times. People will be less likely to offer you a drink if you always have one in your hand or in front of you.

Tip the server or bar tender ahead of time and tell them to give you a pop or juice if you ask for an alcoholic drink. Plan ahead.

- Combine juice with diet pop for the spritzer effect.
- Opt for juice or soda water instead of a hi-ball.
- Have water with a lemon or lime.
- Have diet pop—but in moderation.
- Have a non-alcoholic beer.
- Mix wine with soda for a spritzer.
- Tell others you are on some medication that you cannot combine with alcohol.

Transfer these positive self-talk statements and strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Drugs

Whether it's a prescription drug or a street drug, drugs do pretty much what alcohol does from an emotional level, though not from a caloric level. Drugs can numb our emotions and our decisions, and they can make us not care what we eat or don't eat.

All prescription drugs have side effects. Check with your pharmacist and/or your physician about the side effects of any drug you take. Street drugs are designed to have major effects on our psyche and our feelings. Too often people use drugs to numb feelings or stop psychological pain. Basically, there is no such thing as a "recreational drug"—they're all dangerous and potentially deadly. Potentially, both prescription and street drugs can be abused. As I advised you about the immoderate use of alcohol, please seek professional help immediately if you are abusing or addicted to drugs.

What is your self-talk about any drugs you may be taking?

Are you using drugs "recreationally"? Why?

What strategies can you incorporate to change this part of your life?

Transfer these statements and strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Smoking

Tobacco is one of the most addictive substances we can put in our bodies, and smoking is one of the most addictive behaviors affecting the entire world. While I have sympathy for those who have consistently tried to quit smoking, my advice is to try again and again until you are successful. Nicotine is highly addictive, and like the other chemicals found in cigarettes such as cyanide, it is actually a poison that in large doses can kill. We all know the hazards that smoking presents for our general health—lung disease, emphysema, organ damage, osteoporosis, and heart disease—but smoking also tampers with your metabolism. The sooner you stop smoking the better. There are a variety of programs and support groups that can help if you do want to quit. Staying smoke free will bring a host of benefits: more energy, more efficient metabolism, better appearance, and a better relationship with food.

If ever you need an oxygen mask, make it a metaphor for taking care of yourself first—and not a reality because you have emphysema and need an oxygen mask to breathe!

If you smoke tobacco, what is your self-talk about smoking?

Do you have a plan to quit smoking? What does it look like?

Write down changes in your self -talk about smoking that can become positive statements to help you quit:

Transfer these statements and strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Psychological traps

There are psychological traps that we can fall into that affect our relationship with food. One of the most common is our psychological assessment of our own bodies. I think we are all critical of our bodies at some time in our lives. When that happens, our body image is probably out of whack. The media, Hollywood, and the fashion, diet, and cosmetic industries have greatly influenced our ideas about the perfect body types. They have set an impossibly high standard

of what constitutes the “ideal” that few if any of us can achieve. Closer to home, family and friends can influence our body images through negative or positive comments. The real questions are: why are we continually comparing ourselves to that ideal, and is this a realistic goal?

Quit comparing yourself to a body type that isn’t like yours. The human population has a huge variety of shapes and sizes— one is not ideal over another. We are simply different because of race, genetics, environment, and culture. We all have different body shapes and we all come in different sizes. The ratio between height and weight, bone structure, and muscle mass is different for every human.

Go up to a mirror with a friend, stand facing the mirror, stand sideways into the mirror, and see these differences. Without being critical, appreciate the differences. A positive or healthy body image is a perception that leaves you comfortable with your size and shape. A positive body image is fundamental to your wellness and a healthy mental attitude. A negative body image is likely a distorted perception based on faulty comparisons with others that leaves you filled with shame and anxiety. This can lead to low self-esteem, depression, and eating disorders. Get yourself reintroduced to your body and, if you don’t already, accept and love it! Really. It’s the only one you have— treat it with respect! It will treat you nicely back!

If you have more challenges with this body image perhaps you should see a professional counselor for assistance. For helpful on-line assistance in body image perceptions see the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) website: www.nationaleatingdisorders.org.

What is your perception about your body image?

Have you described “flaws” in your body image?

How can you adjust your self-talk so that your body image perceptions are positive?

What is your new plan for improving your body image?

Transfer these statements into your Operator's Manual.

The busy trap

In today's crazy demanding world we sometimes fall into the trap of trying to be super humans! We are busy people trying to cram in everything and everyone into our schedules!

Hear me when I say OXYGEN MASK! You need to put on your own oxygen mask first—especially in this fast-paced environment. A family member once shared with me about not having time to eat because she was so busy. The concept of eating for fuel and nutrition had escaped her. Once again, if you don't take care of yourself, how on earth are you going to be strong enough for others in your life? Not having time to eat is like saying, "I don't have time to take a pee." Think of how that sounds. Moreover, what are we teaching others about the value of self-care when we don't take care of ourselves?

Eating healthy is part of putting on your own oxygen mask on first. You need to eat for nourishment and for fuel! To deny yourself this fundamental requirement is self-abuse and being too busy to eat is no excuse.

Planning ahead is the key to success when you lead a busy life. Take the time to prepare for a crazy week by planning smart shopping, doing smart food preparation for meals and snacks, and keeping to your plan for healthy eating that respects your body and your well-being. Remind yourself why it is important for you to stay healthy. When you do this, you are planning a healthy relationship with food. You put on your own Oxygen Mask first so that you can be there for those whom you love and who depend upon you.

I had a friend share with me how *not* planning ahead made her week a disaster. This was so important to her that she resolved to return to making a weekly plan! She recalled that when she forgot her lunch on a busy workday, it was very easy to go off track and eat sugar and fast food. She found that when her lunch was made and with her, she ate a healthy meal. She felt very successful, nourished and full of energy, rather than having risked a sugar crash and burn!

What day is your “game plan” day? Write it in your personal calendar as an appointment. Is it different every week? Write it in your schedule and do not erase it! The day for planning can be shifted but it should be kept as a weekly item in your day-timer. To avoid getting caught in the busy trap, your game plan for the week should contain:

- A list of all your meals and snacks for a busy week. (Pull out recipes in advance.)
- A check into your cupboards to see what ingredients you have on hand and what you will need to purchase.
- A grocery list to ensure you purchase everything you need.
- A date to go grocery shopping that you enter into your-daytimer.
- A plan for water intake. Bring a water bottle with you everywhere and refill it all day!

Here are some strategies to assist your weekly food planning:

- Plan your meals ahead of time and make individual freezer meals that are pre-portioned so you will know what and how much you are eating. For instance, when you reheat a meat and rice dish, just plan to add fresh veggies or salad to complete your meal. If you are rushed, this is a great way to stay on track and avoid fast food.
- Plan your meals according to where you will be that day. Is there a microwave accessible? If not make sure to plan for success. Have a meal that is chilled in your lunch bag but is easy to eat. Have lunches that work with your schedule, including some that are easy to eat on the go.
- Make ahead foods such as grilled chicken that can be added to hot dishes, or cut up cold to put in salads, or chopped up and made into a chicken salad with a light dressing for a sandwich.
- Using extra-lean ground beef, make a dish of lasagna with light cheeses, fresh vegetables, and low-sodium seasonings. If you have leftovers, cut the cooled lasagna into pre-portioned pieces for lunches and dinners and quickly freeze them.
- Make spaghetti sauce from scratch so that you know exactly what you put into the sauce. Pre-portion cooked spaghetti and sauce into containers to use during the week. Freeze what you don't plan on using in the first couple of days.
- Precook some fish and rice dishes.

- Cut up vegetables for snacks and put them into pre-portioned bags to quickly grab when you are on the go. Purchase an insulated lunch bag and load it up with all of your day's food requirements and you are organized for the day!
- Perhaps later in the week you can plan to pick up a salad on the go if you anticipate that you'll be low on veggies. That's fine, especially if you have the rest of your meals all planned and ready. Or zip by the grocery store, after you have eaten and pick up some fresh fruit or veggies for the rest of the week.

Planning when and how to eat is as important as planning what to eat. When you eat, make sure you take the time to sit down and taste your food. Our body takes 20 minutes to tell the brain that we are full. If you eat in 5 minutes and haven't yet received the signal that you've had sufficient food, just think what damage can you do in the remaining 15 minutes that you continue to eat!

When you chew, put down your utensils until you have swallowed. Or when you are eating finger food, take a bite then place the item on your plate until you are done swallowing.

Slow down. Think positive thoughts as you eat. You are no good to anyone if you are upset or angry with yourself. Think of your children and the eating habits you are teaching them. Think of the future and how it could be healthier if you change some things today! Breathe!

What is your self-talk about being busy and planning ahead?

What is your new positive self-talk?

What are you going to do if you have a crazy week ahead of you?

Transfer these statements into your Operator's Manual.



Home: Strategies For Food Renovations

In Chapter Eight I discussed emotional eating and the dangers of secret eating. Review those ideas and you'll see how critical it is to have a kitchen filled with smart and healthy choices to help you keep on track with your personal eating program. As part of my professional practice, I visited many homes. Based on what I have seen and what many of my clients have told me, I believe that most people who have sabotaged their eating strategies need to address renovating their kitchen—and I'm not talking about putting in new appliances or counters. I mean they need to reconcile what food they keep in their homes with how they store it and how they control it.

Let's talk about your home

How are your food cupboards, fridge and freezer set up? Have a look and tell me what you see? What types of foods are in each area?

Are there lots of high-calorie snack foods and treats? Can you identify them and explain the reasons for having them in your home?

If you had a nutritionist come look in your kitchen what would she or he say?

How would you like to see these foods organized?

You may not have a challenge in this area, which is great, or you may feel your kitchen is out of control. Either way, write in your journal what your cupboards, fridge and freezer look like. Keep this list so that if later the way you organize food in your kitchen should start to look different, you know what to change.

You could put this statement in your Operator's Manual:

**It is very important to me
that my fridge, freezer and cupboard
contain nutritious food choices, free of temptation,
so that I am successful.**

Or write a statement that will help you to remember and keep the foods at home as healthy as possible, then transfer your statement to your Operator's Manual:

Strategies for organizing your food at home

You are able to control your home food environment by devising a few simple strategies—and sometimes, this task is a matter of organization and planning. When you are feeling great and motivated here are some strategies that may help food renovations in your home:

- Only buy the food in the portions you need.
- If you buy more food than you can use in a reasonably short time, freeze it, share with other people, give it to a food bank, give it away or even throw it out. You might think what a waste to discard food, but is it really a bargain if large food purchases are transformed into excess pounds on you? What then is the cost? Are you trading your food excesses for your health, your relationship with yourself, your relationship with the people you love, or with your job?

- Place items that tempt you and you believe that you need to have on hand in an area difficult to access. For example: if you have a second fridge, put the item in the one furthest away or put the item high in a cupboard where it is difficult to reach. Place tempting food in a closet you don't use and see all the time.
- When you are tempted by treats and snacks, decide to allow yourself a modest serving and put the rest away. For example, if potato chips or candies are a special treat for you, portion some into a small bowl and, before you consume the treat, put the sealed bag away in a distant, hard to reach cupboard.

Write down the strategies that will work for dealing with tempting food in your kitchen:

If you are unsure of your strategies, give it some thought and come back to this issue later. On the other hand, you may have so many that work for you that you must use more paper to record them all. Great! Go for it!

Write these strategies on a piece of paper and post it in your kitchen. Also, transfer these strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Identify favorite foods that get you into trouble

It is critical that you are aware of certain foods that you crave, binge on, or eat out of control. Typically, people have issues or special challenges with foods that fit into 4 categories:

- Sweet
- Salty
- Fatty or Greasy
- Crunchy

Put foods that are a challenge to you into each one of these categories. Perhaps there is a common group that dominates your preferences for today. You know what foods are irresistible and can jeopardize your eating strategies. In time, you may switch from one challenging food category to another. The changes may be due to environment, changing hormones, or new stresses caused by people or situations.

For me, a favorite food challenge could be as simple as going to the cash register at the local gas station convenience store and seeing the brownies in the bakery case by the cashier. The portion size of those brownies is insane—measuring 4 x 5 inches! And would I finish the whole portion in one sitting? Yes—in about 15 seconds! Is there any other way?

There absolutely is another way to deal with this problem, but not at the time I am drooling over the brownie standing in line to pay for my gas. At that time portion control is not on my mind or in my vocabulary.

Can you relate? Replace my favorite food—brownie—with one of your challenges? Here's how I might look at the brownie in a different way. Here are my 3 options:

1. I *honestly* ask myself and answer just as honestly this question: “Is today a bad day that I need to eat the whole 5” x 4” brownie? The answer: YES! I was having a bad day and I want to eat the whole brownie in the car—even before I leave the parking lot. The roller coaster ride may have just begun. Will self-talk prevail? Maybe, maybe not!
2. If it is a bad day and I am being honest with myself, I will avoid that challenging food by paying at the pump where I can't see those monster brownies. Possibly I can implement some other strategy that I have discussed in the chapter about emotional eating such as creating a distraction for this food habit or craving.
3. I will be in control, purchase the brownie, put it in a bag, ask the clerk to tape the bag shut. And when I get home I am going to cut it into a bunch of 1 x 1 inch pieces and freeze all but one. Having given myself permission, I will eat that one brownie portion without guilt.

Can you see the difference? In choosing option 1, I can hear myself say, “I am so angry at myself that I wolfed it down. I feel so guilty! And now that I have blown this day, I will have to start over on Monday. I didn't even taste it, what a waste! I am such a failure. I just might as well have a huge dinner and dessert and the rest of the week is shot! I am going to eat so much this weekend. I can't stay on track anymore.”

Then I would be set to gain another 6 pounds in the next 4–5 days. Negative self-talk around challenging foods has consequences that are hard to get out of—and can be so self-defeating!

In choosing option 2 or 3, I have just ended a possible self-control disaster and kept to my plan for success. I have chosen to pay attention to my strategies so that I may enjoy the occasional treat and enjoy it by keeping everything in moderation! I will enjoy every bite of that brownie portion, rather than wolfing down the original huge piece, which would leave me disgusted with myself. Did I escape the trap of negative self-talk and devastating consequences? Yes, by being willing to assess the situation with awareness of my strategic options to avoid getting into trouble, and by choosing positive self-talk.

Is this as easy as it sounds? Probably not! And, I am sure that you and I will get lots of practice with similar challenges! We now know that we have to be cautious around specific foods in certain situations. Awareness is the key to self-control and finding healthy options.

It's important to be aware of what your favorite foods are, because those foods make you vulnerable to overeating or eating out of control. Writing them down will bring you to a new level of self-discovery. If you know what foods are problematic for you, you can then choose strategies to help you deal with them!

Do you have certain food categories that you would consistently choose as *favorite foods*? List the favorite food or foods get you into trouble by category—sweet, salty, fatty or greasy, or crunchy:

Complete this sentence: “I have to be cautious of these challenging foods...when I am in these situations....” (refer to some of the situations that we touched upon in Chapter Eight concerning emotional eating):

What are some other healthy foods that can give you a similar experience? For example, if you love potato chips because they are crunchy, could you substitute baked pita chips? If sweets are a favorite food category, could you replace some sweets with frozen grapes or pineapple chunks?

Transfer these food strategies into your Operator’s Manual.

Now write an affirming statement that relates to you and a specific food or foods that challenge you.

Transfer this affirming statement into your Operator's Manual.

Grocery shopping: a planned journey

When you are more aware, it is not as easy to make care-less food choices. Alone in the grocery store aisles, you are your own support system and you must rely on yourself to make correct decisions. Sometimes, however, your negative self-talk—which is your not-so-supportive system—kicks in. Where do you turn?

Awareness is the key to successful grocery shopping. Being aware of your choices gives you an opportunity to be accountable for your decisions, to be willing to accept responsibility for your decisions. Awareness gives you power to make choices without guilt or regret, but with confidence in your convictions and ease in decision making. The result is that you have a better relationship with yourself and with the food you purchase because you have a plan.

Here are some strategic tips to use on your next grocery-shopping venture:

- Have a list based on your plan for the entire week! Write it down.
- Shop *after* you have eaten. When you are hungry, everything looks good, and you will invariably fill your shopping cart with impulse buys.
- Shop the walls to purchase as much whole and fresh foods as possible. Most of your fresh items are along the perimeter of the store such as milk and dairy, fruit and veggies, grains, and meats. Some of the items in the aisles are problematic because they contain processed food, snacks, high-fat and high-calorie treats.
- Watch out for displays of specials or new foods that are usually at the ends of aisles. These displays are in your face on purpose, and companies pay big bucks to be in your face!
- When it comes to those irresistible specials in tantalizing displays or in food coupons—ask yourself, “Is it really a bargain if I don’t have it on my list and it’s not part of my program?”
- Learn your areas of food temptation. Refer to your Operator’s Manual and review the section on “Favorite foods that get me into trouble”, and review your strategies for avoiding those challenging foods.
- Choose who you go shopping with. Some people who accompany you can sabotage your best intentions: children who want sugary treats, relatives who have

different ideas about what you should and shouldn't eat, and well-meaning friends who may have an influence on your shopping practices.

- Read labels if you are choosing packaged or processed foods. (See what you should look for in the next section on reading food labels.)

As a smart, strategic shopper, say to yourself, "I will...":

- plan ahead for my week of food needs and make a written grocery list.
- shop after I have eaten.
- shop the walls to purchase fresh and whole foods as much as possible.
- read labels when I must purchase packaged or processed foods.
- stick to my list.
- leave the children at home, if possible, so there is less temptation to buy outside of my list.
- avoid going grocery shopping with someone who could sabotage my plan.
- purchase only those items on my list and avoid using coupons just because I have them for other items not on my list.
- avoid impulse buys and marketing ploys to make such

purchases.

- shop with a support person, or if I must shop alone, be confident that I will stick to my plan.

Now that you have strategies for grocery shopping, here are a few self-discovery journal questions to help you personalize your strategies:

I have tested it out, and it is very difficult to stick to a list with hunger going in your body. How do you shop when you are hungry? Are you successful in sticking to your plan?

If you are buying an item that you know is a challenge for you— guess what?—you are already planning on *not* eating healthy and you are in danger of going off track! What is your self-talk telling you right now about this?

Why is successful grocery shopping important to you?

Awareness in grocery shopping is a choice. What is your self-talk saying in this area?

It is better to have a routine of planning out your week to ensure success. If you are not convinced of this, you need to work on your self-talk.

How about instead of: “I am going to be too busy to plan ahead.”...you change your self-talk to: “I am going to get into a routine of writing food planning into my daytimer, planning out the week for food, and slotting in the grocery shopping time as well as cooking or prep time. I am going to plan ahead this week and see the difference.”

This kind of self-talk is a beginning for some people who have never approached grocery shopping with a plan, while others have moved past this point. Write down what applies to you.

How can you change your self-talk to be positive? List positive things you can say to yourself when you shop for groceries:

Grocery areas to avoid when I am tempted or hungry are:

New strategies I will introduce into my grocery shopping are:

Transfer these ideas and strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Read food labels

When you read food labels you are looking for a large amount of sugars, fats, fiber, or sodium in the list of ingredients. Briefly, I touched on this topic in Chapter Eight in my discussion on “Cravings.” In this section, I’ll provide more detail. You need to know a few more things about reading labels to ensure that you’re getting the whole picture.

The first ingredient listed on a label is the highest in order of weight, the last ingredient listed has the least amount in quantity in the particular product. Additives and flavorings must also be listed.

Sugars: Names for sugar are glucose sorbitol, sucrose, dex-trose, lactose, xylitol and so on. Other sugars are: corn sweetener, cane sugar, brown sugar, raw sugar, mannitol, corn sugar, corn syrups, sorghum, molasses, and honey. There are a number of different artificial sweeteners on the market today. New artificial sweeteners are popping up in food products on a regular basis. A word of caution is to eat everything in moderation.

Fats: Components in many of the foods we eat are saturated in fats, including oils, lard, suet, shortening, and butter. Saturated fats are also found in meats such as beef, and other animal products such as egg yolks, butter, cheese, sour cream, and all milk except skim. Palm and coconut oils are also saturated fats. Unsaturated or Polyunsaturated fats are found in fish and plant foods such as avocados, nuts, seeds, olives, and oils such as sunflower, soya, peanut, and canola oils. Monosaturated fats are olive oil, and rapeseed oil. Omega 3 fatty acids are found in oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, and orange roughy. Trans-fats, meaning liquid vegetable oils that have been turned into solid fats by hydrogenation, are found in margarine, many snack foods, baked goods and fried food. The words *hydrogenated* or *partially hydrogenated* means trans-fats are in the food—mostly processed foods. Fats are often used to make mayonnaise sauces, gravies, and salad dressings. Other names for fat are monoglycerides, diglycerides, triglycerides, lecithin, lipids, egg yolk, and mayonnaise.

Salt: A mineral primarily composed of sodium chloride, salt is essential for most animal life. It is one of the basic tastes and is used as an important preservative. Salt is found in ingredients lists for sea salt, kelp, baking powder, baking soda, monosodium glutamate, sodium saccharin, sodium nitrate, sodium propionate, and any item with sodium in its name. Sauces, gravies, salad dressings, onion

salt, garlic salt, celery salt, canned tomato products, ketchup, chili sauces, barbecue sauces, Worcestershire sauce, cooking wines, capers, miso, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, yeast, prepared mustards, soya sauce, tamarin, pickles, corned beef, processed products and cheeses can be high in sodium. A general rule is to limit your intake of foods that contain more than one mg. sodium per calorie. Foods claiming “low-salt” or “no-salt” on their labels are preferable—but read the label to make sure the claim is true.

Fiber: Diets are enhanced with fiber. Dietary fiber comes from plants and is not digested in the intestinal tract but may be metabolized in the lower gut. Different plants have different kinds of fiber: pectin and gum (which are water soluble), and mucilage, cellulose, hemicellulose and lignin (which are water insoluble). Sources of dietary fibers are found only in plant foods—for example: whole wheat, whole grains, oat bran, multi-grain, rye, oatmeal, brown rice, wild rice, whole grain pasta, fresh fruits and vegetables, salads, beans, lentils, split peas, nuts, seeds, and dried fruit and so much more. They assist in digestion and ensuring that the stomach and intestines work well. In labeling, the fiber content of a food is listed in weight as well as a percentage of the daily intake value.

And here’s a final word on grocery shopping: if you need someone to purchase groceries for you because you feel that you are too busy or believe that being in a grocery store is too tempting for you right now—go ahead. Remember this is about YOUR success, and success means taking care of yourself. When you are more confident about your ability to grocery shop, revisit your list of strategies that you feel are important for you to follow and go get it done. That is what your Operator’s Manual is for—to have a plan at your fingertips, all ready to go!

Family meals

Our society is characterized by busyness. We are very busy people in our business and in our private lives. Family life can be as complicated as it is busy, as we try to be everywhere and everything for the rest of our family members. It is critical that you remember the principles in *Oxygen Mask* in order to keep yourself healthy and able so that you can help your family. Our children are the ones who will suffer the most if they never know what it is like to have healthy, sit-down meals with conversation and family. Family meals should be healthy in nourishment—for the spirit and mind as well as the body.

You can serve tasty meals that are quick, nutritious, and appealing for the entire family. There are many sources to help you design and prepare healthy family meals: cookbooks, magazines, the web and special media programs. From these sources, you will discover food preparation and cooking techniques that are lower in fat, sugar and sodium. While there are a lot of pre-prepared healthy foods at the grocery store that can be served quickly for your convenience, there are many fast food meals you can make at home using whole foods. For example, check out some recipes in cookbooks for diabetics, low fat cookbooks, or heart-smart cookbooks for healthy meal plans. Investigate them all and, most of all: plan, plan, plan!

Review your journal entries in Chapter Eight, especially the emotional eating section. Look again at the first few pages of this chapter at strategies for grocery shopping and planning ahead. If you are planning for yourself, you should be doing the same for your family.

What are your best strategies for planning family meals?
Write them down:

Do you have a lot of food thrown out because you haven't eaten what you had planned? Why?

What strategies can you use to plan better family meals?

Transfer these strategies into your Operator's Manual.

If being too busy is your principal challenge, there are several strategies that can help overcome time-challenged weeks. For example, be creative and assemble freezer meals on Sunday before the week gets started. Have a variety of meals ready for whatever mood strikes you and your family. Everyone could have something different if they like. You can make freezer meals that are healthy and fun too. For all meals, but especially family meals, it is best to sit

down at the table to eat rather than eating in your car or in front of the television. The principle here is to slow down! Take time to visit with the family, discuss the day, and put your fork or knife down if food is in your mouth. Chew your food rather than inhaling it! Enjoy each bite and taste the food!

If the family insists on foods that you know are clearly not in your eating plan and you have a challenge with them, you might make a choice to stay in control by eating your main meal before or after the family eats. While they eat, you can have a salad. This way you are not tempted by their choices and are still at the table for conversation and taking part in the family gathering. You know what will work for you. Make a plan ahead of time.

If you do not feel comfortable preparing family meals, ask for support from your family for some help. You might be surprised what they come up with. The ideal, of course, is to prepare foods you would enjoy that are nutritious and fun for your whole family. One father shared with me that he was not great at planning meals and kept putting it off. He also mentioned that his teenaged daughter enjoyed this kind of activity, so I suggested that he let his daughter plan the meals for the week and he could double-check them for nutrition. His food planning challenge was solved.

Stay motivated, revisit your goals and the reasons why you are eating healthy. Do you need to change some of your goals that you listed in Chapter Six? Do that right now!

Write about some things that are important to you about family meals.

What would you do differently about family meals?

Why is this important?

Transfer these ideas into your Operator's Manual.

Food preparation can be one of the single most significant factors in creating healthy meals. Be alert to food preparation descriptions such as frying, deep-frying, coated, or adding of fat/oil to cook. These methods add more calories and fat than is necessary. Better methods of preparation are grilling, baking, steaming, boiling, broiling, microwaving, barbecuing, roasting, poaching, braising, and stir-frying.

Here are a few tips to reduce the fat, sodium and sugar in your cooking:

- Drain off fat that accumulates during cooking.
- Refrigerate sauces, soups or stews, and gravies before serving in order to skim off the congealed fat that has risen to the top. Reheat them.
- In preparing meats, trim off fat as much as possible and remove the skin from poultry prior to cooking.
- When you stir-fry, use a low-sodium broth rather than oil to cook meats and vegetables. To thicken sauces, use cornstarch or rice flour.
- In some baking replace fats with applesauce or no-fat yogurt appropriate for the recipe.
- Reduce the amount of sugar or salt in a recipe.
- Reduce the amount of cheese in the recipe (low-fat of course).
- Avoid cooking your vegetables dishes with fat and salt, or adding fat and salt at the table.
- Use more fresh garlic, onions, peppers or fresh herbs in your dishes.
- Add a touch of flavor to your baking; reduce the sugar and add vanilla or almond extracts or cinnamon powder for flavor.

What are some changes you can make in your food preparation techniques?

Transfer these strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Lunches are an important part of family meals whether they are eaten in the home or away. Planned and prepared in your kitchen, homemade lunches and snacks have several benefits. Taken to school or work, they often free us from the worry of what we will eat for lunch and questions about how to stay on our eating plan. Besides being cost-effective, pre-made lunches keep us away from tempting and usually less nutritious fast food and restaurant meals. We know exactly what is in our pre-made lunches and can include the proper balances for optimum nutrition and healthy eating. Variety in lunch and snack foods is not a problem because we can package and carry hot and cold foods. Leftovers often make excellent lunches. Use a thermos for hot or cold foods; thermal bags and small freezer packs can ensure freshness.

Making lunches and snacks at home takes planning. Plan ahead for a week's worth of lunches and snacks for the whole family. Set an appropriate time for assembling bag lunches in advance—for some families, the night before works well, and for others the morning seems simpler. I plan my lunch and snacks for my days off too; then when I'm running errands, I know I can stick to my eating plan.

Put variety and nutrition in all the lunches, keeping sweets, carbonated drinks, sodium and fats to the minimum or eliminating them all together. If you need suggestions, ask your family, other parents, or look for information on lunch suggestions on the web.

If you are tempted to snack on the ingredients as you prepare the lunch meals, ask other family members to help you make them. If you are eating at home, follow the same principles for all family meals: sit together, engage in conversation, put down your utensils between bites, chew thoroughly, and turn off phones, radios and television distractions. Enjoy your time together over lunch!

What type of lunches are you making?

Why challenges get in the way of making family lunches?

What would you like to change about homemade lunches?
And why?

What advantages are there in preparing lunches at home that you take to work or to school?

Do you notice that you do better when you have your lunch planned ahead? Write down why you perceive that is true for you:

Transfer these ideas into your Operator's Manual.

Family meals can become cherished memories—especially if they are nutritious and healthy as well as tasty and fun. Don't make them a challenge; instead make them a joy through awareness and advance planning.



Dining Out: Strategies For Away From Home

With our fast-paced lifestyles, I think people sometimes dine out more than they eat at home. Restaurant and fast food meals, buffet dinners, social events, holiday dinners, big family gatherings, and vacation meals can become special challenges for most of us. Why? There are many reasons. When we eat out, we perceive that because we are not in control of ingredients, preparation or portion sizes, “dining out” means “getting out” or abandoning our food plan. We may become confused or feel defeated by the number of choices we must make when we eat away from home.

And finally, we may make assumptions about what is appropriate behavior when we’re dining out or even give ourselves permission to overeat. Some people have few challenges with dining out, but they may struggle with eating plans at home. Still other people find that they are in control when they eat at home, but a party or dining out can be disastrous for their eating plans.

Let’s get right to the core of challenges you may have while eating away from home:

What is your self-talk associated with dining out? Identify negative and positive aspects:

How can you change your self-talk about dining out to positive statements?

Transfer these ideas into your Operator's Manual.

It is very important to keep the Operator's Manual current and handy so that you can refer back to it at a moment's notice. That is why I have designed the Operator's Manual to contain all of your ideas, to help you at all times when you are challenged.

Often we don't remember all the things that work for us in a time of chaos, when emotions are running high, or when our fast-paced world pushes us to the limit. Be aware of the self-talk in that moment. What are you telling yourself? Are you reviewing successful strategies or feeling despair because of negative thoughts? Choose to write what works in the journal, use the journal and keep aware and adjust your self-talk. Work on that self-talk and adjust areas of concern.

Take 20 seconds to refer to the appropriate section—especially this section on dining out—and be prepared for all eventualities so that you can remain in control and be successful. You have choices and strategies that you have worked on in your Oxygen Mask journal and transferred to your Operator's Manual. Use these strategic tools that have been written by you for you.

Read your Operator's Manual before you dine out. Have a plan ready to go in your head before you eat away from home. Repeatedly saying, "To heck with the plan, I'll just start over on Monday" is not an option—and it's not a realistic strategy. You can manage all your challenges through self-awareness and planning!

Restaurants

In North America the restaurant experience is often rated on the size and amount of food in individual servings. The trend has been that the average customer will complain if served a reasonable portion. Value seems to be based on not only the quality of the food, but on the quantity of food on individual plates. Portions have exploded! (The price has to keep up with the quantity explosion, so the cost of dining out has risen as well, but that is not my concern.) You need to plan ahead when you dine out in restaurants.

When ordering ask for a smaller portion or a half-portion. Many restaurants will gladly do this. If the restaurant does not comply, ask for a "take out" container to come with your meal. This provides you the opportunity of judging your own portion size and putting what you will not be eating at that meal in the container to take home. Do this before you dig in to the meal, and you will find that you probably have enough in your container for another meal! The bonus: you won't be tempted to overeat.

Some restaurants will claim that they do not have smaller portions as an option, but they will provide a plate with less food on it—although they will charge you full price. This is actually a realistic option. If you eat the larger meal, what is the real price are you paying in terms of emotions, guilt, blame, or shame? Is it worth it to sacrifice healthy

eating, burden your relationship with food, and jeopardize your relationships with the ones you love?

Here is a list of strategies I have found helpful when counseling people about dining out concerns and challenges:

- Call the restaurant ahead of time and have the menu faxed to you so that you can decide what to order ahead of time that fits your eating plan.
- Pre-order your food to ensure success if you are really not sure of your ability to order wisely in front of other people.
- Ask your party if it is OK to order first so that you are not tempted by what others are ordering.
- When you order ask how items are prepared. Ask if your order can be grilled or poached instead of fried.
- Order grilled veggies with your meal instead of pasta or mashed potatoes with gravy.
- Be conscious when it comes to ordering food with gravies, cream sauces or sauces in general. Ask for them on the side, so you can control the amount you consume. Just dip your fork into the sauce for flavor as you take a bite of food.
- Be cautious in ordering food that comes with salad dressings, nuts, high sodium meats, cheeses, bread cubes, nacho platters, olives, and guacamole. Ask for salad dressings on the side—dip your fork in them for flavor rather than pouring them on your salad. Refer to

Chapter Nine for more details about food preparation and foods to eat with caution.

- Offer to split a meal with a companion if it is appropriate. Ask your server to bring for another side plate so that you can divide the meal into two portions. Restaurants are often happy to do this.
- Ask the server ahead of time to take your plate as soon as you are done.
- When you are done eating, place your knife and fork on your plate. Treat your plate like a clock: place the knife and fork together with handles at 5 o'clock pointing to 10 o'clock.
Push the plate just a few inches away from you with your thumbs on the edge of the plate to signal you are done. If you have been using a paper napkin, place it on top of your plate. (Proper etiquette means that you would not do this with cloth napkins; they should simply be placed on the table beside your plate.) These are signals to your server that you are finished with your meal.
- If you choose not to eat the full portions you have been served, ask if you can have the remainder to go.

How do you feel about dining out in restaurants?

What new strategies can you use when you dine at a restaurant?

Transfer these strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Fast food

Typically fast food restaurants serve foods that are high in fat, sugar, sodium, and carbohydrates. Recent trends in healthy eating have prompted some fast food chains to incorporate healthy choices, however those items are not as popular, sometimes sit on the shelf for extended periods of time, sometimes go bad, and all too often are quickly replaced in the menu. Fast food typically keeps to items that are popular and sell consistently such as high fat content burgers, fries, and carbonated beverages loaded with sugar.

Fast food restaurants have also suffered from perceived value being in the quantity of their food. "Super-sized" meals can double or even triple the portions of fat, sugar, and sodium that we normally consume in an entire day!

If you choose to go to a fast food restaurant, plan to go to one where you will make good choices. One strategy is to order a kids meal to take advantage of the smaller size; give the toy to the kids. Look online and get to know several fast food menus so that you know the percentages and nutritional values of their items and can figure out what will work best for you ahead of time. That way you are prepared with a game plan.

Think of all the wasted energy associated with decision-making and the wasted energy if you don't make informed decisions. The consequences in your self-talk could be: guilt, beating up on yourself, shame, and feelings of loss of control. These feelings could spoil the whole event, plus affect your resolve to maintain your healthy eating plan.

Breathe! Eating fast food is inevitable—so why not make it enjoyable and *smart*! Make intelligent choices. Select fast food meals that will fit into your daily eating plan, and keep to your goals. This may be easier than it sounds if you remember ideas about moderation.

For example, imagine that you allow yourself to have 1 small order of fries with a grilled chicken burger, mayo on the side, with juice or water to drink. Slowly eat one fry at a time, tasting each bite. Enjoying the meal. Feel like you don't have to finish the fries, knowing you are content with simply having 6-8 pieces. Make a decision that the rest of the fries are not worth going short on other foods later in the day. Accept that though a few are tasty, they are greasy and too salty to eat the entire portion. You know that eating all of them might give you an upset stomach, and you decide it's not worth it to eat them all.

Self-control means you choose to be content as you follow your plan and feel proud of yourself. You've put your oxygen mask on first: you are taking care of yourself and breathing easier about your relationship with food.

What are your best choices with fast food?

When do you make your worst choices with fast food?

What is your self-talk about going to fast food restaurants?

If you say, "It's going to be terrible! I don't know what to order to keep on my plan!" That is how it is going to be. That is what you have told yourself, therefore you will make it so.

Instead, you might say, "I am going to prepare myself ahead of time, learn about my choices, and make the best decision for my health." That is what you will likely do.

Hear yourself in the fast food line-up. What are you saying to yourself?

How will you change your self-talk to be positive—and to make right choices?

Transfer these thoughts into your Operator’s Manual in the Dining Out section.

What are my fast food strategies?

Why will they work for me?

Transfer these strategies into your Operator’s Manual.

Buffets

The infamous buffet is often billed as “ALL YOU CAN EAT!” as if this were the goal of buffet dining. Some fear the buffet table, some love it! No matter which side you are on, the visual impact of the buffet spread is sometimes daunting. The first idea that comes to mind concerns choices—not only what choices are to be made, but what are the best value choices. Some people want to get their money’s worth. Usually the last choice to be made is “What on this buffet table is healthy and fits into my eating plan?”

Buffets logically engage us in a lot of self-talk because there are so many choices to be made about so many tempting dishes. Self-talk might be totally different for each person, but it often comes as a challenge to our sense of fairness. It doesn’t have to be. If you are upset about the price compared to the quantity of food you plan to consume, who really pays? Are you being realistic or opportunistic?

Have a look at what is going on in your head? Not just about this topic, but be more aware of what you are telling yourself about food. Too often, we have negative self-talk! Think about this. I did when I counseled people. I would think that it has cost some people—in one year alone—\$3300 dollars to lose 45 pounds. I had to ask these people if they were going to blow it all by being influenced by their negative talk about their relationship with food. They had a choice to make. Were they going to get every last bit of value from a restaurant or buffet meal by consuming as much as they could, or were they going to attach value to the quality of their dining out experience?

I would often rise above their objections and justifications by asking, “What about the price of your health?”

If buffets scare you, don’t go to one until you are comfortable with choosing the right foods and eating according to your eating plan. Cost is irrelevant; believe that you are paying for the experience, not how much you can eat or cart away.

What is your self-talk associated with buffets?

What can you say to yourself differently?

Transfer these thoughts into your Operator’s Manual in the Dining Out area.

Here are some strategies for eating out at a buffet:

- If it is a group decision to go to a buffet, and you are uncomfortable with that choice, ask if anyone minds going somewhere else. If you feel supported, explain that to the people in your group.

- Ask if you could meet them at the restaurant after they eat. Or say that you are tied up until then, and you will come for a coffee after instead.
- If you end up going to the buffet restaurant, ask for a menu instead of choosing the buffet option. Feel confident making this good choice and avoiding the buffet.
- Ask to be seated far away from the buffet. If the buffet is in someone's home, sit far away from the buffet table.
- If you choose to partake of the buffet, survey the spread for wise choices and also for ideas that will promote your success. Stick to your plan.
- Tell yourself that the foods on a buffet table always look much better than they taste. Actually, this is probably true because the foods are prepared in large quantities and kept warm or cold for hours rather than being prepared fresh for individual plates.
- Choose a smaller plate if you can. If a smaller plate is not available, then stay within the inner ring of the dinner plate and don't place any food beyond that edge.
- Have a small soup to start, or a large salad.
- Have just a dab of what you would like to try. When you place the food samples on your plate, arrange it so that foods don't touch each other.
- Take your time. Sit down and enjoy your food. Taste every bite; enjoy the company.

- Have fruit for dessert.
- Share a sugary dessert if you must, but have just one or two bites. Enjoy them. Savor the flavors. Allow yourself to have the taste without overindulging.
- When you are done eating, place your knife and fork on the plate and cover your plate with your paper napkin. Shift the plate away from you a couple of inches. This signals that you are finished eating and a server can remove your plate.
- Resist the temptation to go back to the table for “seconds.” Be honest with yourself about your eating plan and be in control. Breathe!

My buffet strategies are:

Transfer these strategies into your Operator’s Manual and update them as you experience different buffet situations.

Social events

In most cultures many social events are associated with foods. In your home, at work, and around your friends you may feel in control of your food consumption, but social events may present a whole different set of challenges for you. Weddings, company banquets, cocktail parties, pot-lucks, retirement celebrations, going-away parties, political rallies, art opening receptions, and church picnics are just a few examples of social events that often serve food. The biggest challenge is that the food is usually free!

My worst time is “free” food at a reception, conference, or at someone else’s house. As I scan the food table I think of new recipes, new food ideas, foods I don’t normally have on hand, or don’t normally eat because they are on my “problematic foods” list.

Like so many people, when I’m in this situation, my first thought is that I should fill up with free food. I am aware that in my college years this attitude helped me to gain 15 extra pounds. This is such a well-known phenomenon in new college students in Canada and the States that it is often referred to as the “Freshman Fifteen”! I now know that “getting my fill” showed up in my midsection!

Now, as an adult, I am aware that at a social event I can choose to have one taste of a single food item and be satisfied. I have learned to shift my focus and instead concentrate on the occasion, the people, and the social aspects of the event rather than on the food.

Here are some more strategies that can help you focus on the event and not the food:

- Plan your day when you know you will be going out later. Balance your meals and snacks earlier in the day. Otherwise you will be so hungry that you will overdo it when you get to the event.
- Compensate for an occasion that you know will be centered on food: plan extra exercise and balance out your daily food intake.
- Ask what will be served so you know how to plan ahead of time.
- Plan to eat in moderation and adjust your portions accordingly. Choose foods that are healthy.
- If you must have a sweet dessert, select one that is your least favorite so you not eat as much of it.
- Ask your host or hostess if you may to bring a dish to the event—make it something that you can fit into your eating plan.
- Do you have a support person with you? Tell that support person ahead of time about any food or eating challenges you expect to encounter. Talk about the support you need.
- Show up to the event later to avoid the appetizers. Eat before you go.

- Pre-portion your plate with foods that fit your plan and only eat what is on your plate to avoid picking.
- Focus on the non-food topics and on the other guests.
- Keep a healthy drink in your hand at all times; make it a full or half-full glass to ensure no one asks if you need a drink.
- Keep a purse, or a plate, cutlery and a napkin in the other hand to keep you from nibbling at the food or refilling your plate.
- Keep the conversation going as you stay away from the table or the treats.
- Help the hosts by taking empty plates or cups the kitchen to avoid being tempted to nibble at the food offerings.

Here are some personal examples of strategies I use. As you know, I love chocolate brownies, but if they have nuts in them I am less likely to eat them and overindulge. So, if I have brownies at my own event, I buy ones with nuts in them. At Halloween, I get the chocolate bars that just don't taste good to me, so I stay away from them.

An option is to schedule the social event to take place at your home. Have a lot of healthy choices on the menu. Perhaps you could prepare only what you know helps you to stay on track rather than have tempting foods on the menu that are not a part of your plan. Plan to serve some foods that you allow yourself to eat so you don't feel deprived.

If scheduling an event at your house is too stressful or is too much of a temptation with food preparation, suggest that someone else host the event. Think it through—what will be better for you? If you do host the event at your house, do you believe you can control things better? Figure this out. Have a plan either way. Here are some self-discovery journaling questions that may help you understand more about your relationship with food at social events.

Are social events an area of concern for you? If so, why?

What is your self-talk at a social event that involves food?

Do you sometimes use the excuse to indulge in overeating on social occasions by saying to yourself, “I will eat this and not have supper.” Does that always work?

Where is the best place for you to attend a social event?
Why?

What strategies do you employ for eating at social events?

Your ideas may change from event to event so make sure you have several ideas! Keep writing and return to this later as you come up with more ideas.

Transfer your strategies and self-discovery ideas into your Operator's Manual.

Holidays and family celebrations

Holidays can be a challenge for all of us. There is at least one holiday per month in North America—and perhaps more if we include religious and ethnic holidays. For many families, events such as weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, and reunions are occasions celebrated with food. So, when it comes to dining out, at least once a month we have the opportunity to be challenged in the healthy eating department. Where do we start?

You need to listen to your positive self-talk, be aware, plan ahead, have strategies in place and breathe every day—or you could be in big trouble. Maybe you feel like you are already in big trouble. It's OK—take it one day at a time and you can manage these occasions. Your crowded food calendar didn't happen overnight. Be kind to yourself and work through this journal; keep it with you and use it!

Take all of your strategies for dining out and apply them to holiday and family celebrations as well. Plan ahead and decide what you are going to do in order not to overdo it. At the event, have a taste of everything if you wish. Just don't exceed your daily food intake plan. Perhaps you have a favorite holiday or family food. Enjoy it, but balance it within your day or decide to exercise more to compensate. Find some support, pay attention to portion size, listen to your self-talk, and adjust it if necessary. Keep coming back to awareness and your strategies. Remind yourself about your goals, why you want to be healthy. Then put on your own Oxygen Mask and breathe easier about your relationship with food during the holidays and/or at family celebrations!

My self-talk around holiday and family celebrations has to be:

Holidays and family celebrations are like social events: they require planning and strategies. What are your strategies for your holidays?

What are your strategies for family celebrations?

Transfer these strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Family celebrations can bring a special set of problems. Review Chapter Seven and the sections on Childhood Lessons and Comfort Food. Beyond certain cultural and natural expectations around eating, we are sometimes confronted by challenges that our own family members present in celebratory events. After you review strategies that you've written for yourself in this chapter on dining out, think of how you can apply them to family celebration meals. Think of some additional strategies. Below are some self-discovery questions that may help you.

Do you have an aggressive food pusher in your family?
Identify these persons and the reasons they try to push eating at these family events.

What are your plans to handle the food push?

What are your plans to handle a large or small family celebration that involves food?

These will be similar to strategies that you have already used for other dining out events. Transfer the information into your Operator's Manual.

Vacations

Being away from home is like dining out 3 times a day, so review your strategies in this chapter and Chapter Seven: “Why You Eat”. When you are on vacation, use a plan to stay the same weight or to maintain your weight. Be wise, be aware, be healthy and be successful!

How and what can you plan? Here are some vacation-specific strategies to augment the ones we have already covered:

- Plan ahead and learn about the foods that are in your travel area.
- Be safe with foods! Consult your local travel agent and your health clinic about dangerous foods in third world countries.
- On the road, take along a cooler and fill it with healthy food and snacks—fruit, juice, and chopped up veggies.
- When in a hotel or motel, ask ahead of time for a kitchenette; ask if your room has a microwave and fridge.
- At your destination, go to recommended local food markets for healthy snacks and meal ingredients.
- Ask if the kitchen in your hotel, motel or resort features healthy menu alternatives.
- Eat in moderation.

What is your self-talk about vacations and food?

How can you improve your self-talk?

What new ideas are you going to tell yourself about your eating behavior while on vacation? Remember to Breathe! You have the power to make good choices about your relationship with food when you are on vacation!

What will you plan in advance to maintain your weight while you are on vacation?

What will you do if you gain 3 or more pounds?

What will some of your strategies be while you are on vacation?

Transfer these ideas and strategies into your Operator's Manual and don't forget to pack it!



Support Systems: Getting Enough Air

Having people who support you is very important when it comes to your weight management and taking care of yourself. This support system provides positive encouragement while at the same time keeps you accountable. Here are a few general ideas about how support systems work.

People in your support group ask how they can best support you in challenges you face with eating and food. Support people do not scold you or treat you badly when you have had a bad food experience; instead they listen, offer suggestions, and ask how they can help you in the future. At various times you might need your support people to be firmer with you than at other times. Be clear with them in advance that you rely on them to support you in certain ways and not in others—communicate with them and tell them what you need. Together, you and your support people can make a difference.

Don't manipulate your support people. They are there for you. I know it can happen because I have done it—I've manipulated someone who was trying to support me in order to get what I wanted in the short-term. Fortunately it didn't work, because I could have jeopardized my goals to eat healthy.

Keep track of what works for you with regard to support. Each person has a different approach and each person has different needs. Some like support to be delivered gently but firmly, others appreciate constructive confrontation, motivational talk, and excitement. Still others prefer strict support. You decide what you need at this time and be flexible enough to change it as your needs change.

Support at home

In particular, our home support relies on the people who live with us and are most familiar with our needs and challenges. If your support system is made up of family members or people who live with you and is less than desirable, it is important to at least talk with these people. Let them know how happy it would make you if you had someone on your side to support you. If you have people who want to be on your support team but actually are out to sabotage your success, you may want to limit your time with those people until you feel less tempted to compromise your plan and more empowered to stick with it.

Perhaps you live on your own. Who else could provide home support? Some ideas for support people who don't live with you but who are familiar with your home life might be: a close relative, a friend or teammate, a parent or sibling, your neighbor, a gym partner, your personal trainer or weight loss counselor, or your chiropractor or doctor.

Here are a few ways your home support system can work effectively:

- When you are tempted to have foods that are not part of your program, foods that you have identified as being problematic, or if you think you might begin to binge on food, your support persons will be alert to those dangers and ask if they can do or say anything that would help you get past this episode. For example, they might help with a distraction technique to help you forget about food.
- When you feel tempted by foods, talk to your support

person right away and ask him or her to assist you. Don't expect that person to guess what you are thinking or to police your every move.

- Ask your support people to move high-risk foods to an area you are unaware of or is hard for you to reach.
- Suggest that your support people not eat high-risk foods in front of you, or at least ask you if it OK to eat in front of you.
- Support people should be encouraged to ask if you need some motivating encouragement to manage your eating program. Perhaps they could remind you of your goal to eat healthy food, manage your weight, and not feel trapped or stressed about your food choices.

Here are a few self-discovery questions that may help you communicate better with your home support group. You might share your answers with that person or group so that they will know your specific challenges and expectations.

How is your support system at home?

What is your self-talk saying when you are at home? Do you

hear yourself saying, “Who cares?” or “I’m not happy with myself”. What negative thoughts are you telling yourself?

Why do you think you are feeling this way? If you do not know, you can come back to this section later—but please do revisit this question.

What works for your support at home today?

What works for your support at home when you really need help?

How would you like your home support to work differently?

How would your home support change as your needs change? What would that look like?

Transfer these ideas into your Operator's Manual.

Support at work

Do you have a support system at work? If you spend a lot of time at work you will need support there just as you need at home. If you feel comfortable doing so, ask people at work to help support your healthy eating goals. Work can be a disaster area if there are co-workers or people in your workplace who are not on the same wavelength as you in trying to eat healthy. Some co-workers or friends will want you to eat as they do so that they don't feel so bad about what food and health choices they are making. If this is the case, enlist some co-workers to support you. Likely they also will recognize these as challenges for themselves and you may find that you will form a mutual support team.

With awareness, willingness, strategies, positive self-talk, and a good support system this could be your key to success!

At work your support person or team is there for you. Like your support people at home, these supporters do not scold you or scorn you when you have had a bad experience with food. Instead they ask how they can help you. They get you motivated, keep you motivated, and cheer you on if that is what you want and need. They remind you how important your goals are.

How is your support system at work?

How would you like your support at work to be different?

Do you know what you would like for support in your workplace?

What does support look like to you at work?

If you do not know, here are some examples:

When you are about to eat something that is not in the plan and is unhealthy, communicate with your support people: ask them to assist you, don't just assume it's their responsibility to know what is going on in your head. Your support person can then help you avoid the situation. Perhaps they will help with one of your distractions to get you away from food. Maybe they will help by moving high-risk foods to an area out of your sight and reach. Your work support person or team will be sensitive to eating high-risk foods in front of you. They can explore with you some motivations to keep to your plan and goals to be healthy.

At various times you may need your support to be delivered more gently or more firmly. Talk to your support people and tell them what you need. You may want to share the answers to some of these self-discovery questions with your work supporter(s):

What is your self-talk saying at work? For example, do you hear yourself saying, "Who cares?" or "I'm not happy with myself," What negative things are you telling yourself?

Why do you think you feel this way?

If you do not know why you feel this way, flag this page and come back to this area later.

If your support system at work is less than desirable, perhaps it is important at least to talk with them. Let them know how happy it would make you if you had someone on your side to support you. If you have a support system that is out to sabotage all of your success, you may want to limit your time with those people until you feel more comfortable about being around them in situations where tempting foods are being served. Keep busy with work and projects until you feel more confident about this.

If there are no real support candidates in your workplace, try others who could support where you work. Is there someone that you trust who works close to your office? Is there someone that you see all the time during lunchtime?

When you do find some support in your work environment, keep track of what works for you. Each person has a different approach and each person has different needs. You decide what you need and change it to fit.

At work, what works from your support person(s) when you really need help?

Transfer this information into your Operator's Manual.

Here are some strategies that you and your workplace support team can do together to support each other:

- Keep busy with your work. It is important to keep focused and avoid thinking about food.
- Plan in your snacks with your breaks; bring healthy lunches and snacks from home.
- Always eat away from your desk.
- Drink water during the day and have your water bottle always full.
- Resist the temptation to keep sweets and snacks on or in your desk.
- Get up and walk around if you are seated all day!
- Challenge the office to select more nutritious snacks and meals.

- Switch to healthier options for office birthday, transfer or retirement celebrations—for example, try a fruit flan rather than a slab cake with thick icing.
- Ask if the healthy snacks can be put in one cupboard and less nutritious snacks organized in another cupboard that you will not go into.
- Get the office motivated to start walking at lunchtime.
- Encourage others to follow your habit of taking the stairs rather than the escalator or elevator.

Chat with the Social Department or Human Resources to see if you can head up a committee on making the workplace a healthier place. Or if you are too shy, perhaps they will take the idea and run with it.

There are many strategies you can employ at work that will help you stay in control of your eating and food. For example, exercise at lunchtime to stay motivated and keep your body moving, or take a walk around the block and get some fresh air! Think about what will work for you. And write it down.

My strategies for the workplace—which I can share with my workplace support person or my support team—are:

Transfer these strategies into your Operator's Manual.

If your workplace doesn't present any particular challenges— that is great—but what if you transfer to a new job in a different department or even to a different company? You could end up in a different workplace dynamic in the future. I recommend that you still answer the questions below in this journal, transfer some of those ideas to your Operator's Manual, and then periodically, especially if your workplace changes, review what is important to you and what works.

You may choose to share some of these ideas with your workplace support person or persons, or if you have formed a mutual support team, you might like to discuss some of these ideas together.

Do you have a work environment that is good for healthy food choices? What is it like?

Do you have a kitchen/eating area at work that is full of bad snacks and junk food? If yes, what can you do to change this environment?

Is there an office birthday or other special occasion almost every week that is celebrated with a cake or other unhealthy foods? What can you do to change or alter these situations?

What ideas can you come up with at work that will help your eating program's success?

Transfer this information into your Operator's Manual.

Do you have someone at work that loves to eat especially when everyone else is eating with him/her?

Do you have an aggressive food push at work?

Are you that person?

Did you ever consider that?

What can you do to improve that?

Do you have ideas of how to handle this person?

If they feel that it is safe to do so, some people will talk with the person who is continually pushing food and explain that this behavior may be problematic for others trying to control their food intake. To avoid that person, you can eat in a different area, make outside lunch appointments, or run errands outside the office. If an encounter is unavoidable, always be pleasant to the food pusher. For example, when I found myself in an office with a person who was always pushing food on others, I kept my plate full of healthy foods and politely said, “No thank you—I have something already.”

Transfer these strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Just like the strategies you use at home, distraction techniques can be very important to help you with tempting or challenging foods and food situations at work. Depending on your specific job, you might be able to fit some of these distractions into your workday. Here are 5 categories that may help you:

1. Things that can be done quickly during work:

- Take a bathroom break.
- Take your break early and enjoy the snack you planned.
- If you are in charge of recycling and need to clear the small bins, do it now.
- If you need to go to check the mail or drop off something in another department, do it now.

2. Busy activities during work—things that will totally take your mind off of food or take up a lot of time:

- Engage in any project that requires close attention to detail.
- Set an agenda for your next meeting or write up the minutes from the last meeting.
- Work on your annual report.
- Contact clients.

3. Things you can do on breaks at work:

- Go for a walk.
- Walk the stairs.
- Run an errand.

- Balance your checkbook.

4. Things that are relaxing during breaks:

- Take a breather outside.
- Go into the boardroom if it's vacant and relax.
- File your nails.
- Go to your car for a nap and have someone call you in 20 minutes after your break is over.

5. Things you can do with others or with others around you:

- Plan the office softball game.
- Plan the staff BBQ.
- Organize the next office charity event.
- Start an office book club, sports lottery, or seminar series.

When you are having a challenge with food and eating at work, decide which category will fit into your work schedule. Select one of the activities to complete and if you need more distraction, then continue with selecting another activity.

You might find that you can think of only a few distraction categories because of the type of work that you do. Perhaps your categories are mostly suited to activities that

you can do during lunches or breaks. That is fine—just write down practical distraction strategies that fit you and your workplace. If you work from home, you will have some different distraction ideas from those you would have in a more conventional office situation.

Whatever your workplace, if food and food situations are a challenge, be prepared to design your own personal distraction categories. This technique works! You will distract yourself from thinking about food so that you can get on with your work—and possibly move on to bigger and better things.

Under each of your categories list 2–3 activities that you could do to help distract you from overeating at work. Write down your categories that apply to your workplace and can be added to your Distraction Techniques list that you created in Chapter Eight in the distractions for emotional eating section:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

For each category write down your activity

Category 1

Category 2

Category 3

Category 4

Category 5

Transfer this information into the Distractions Techniques area of your Operator's Manual. Add to the list a note about why it is important that you stay on track and your purpose for wanting to eat healthy. This will help keep you motivated.

Transfer these strategies into your Operator's Manual.

Friends and support

Friends can be great support—or they can be a problem. Some friends can be very supportive while other friends can want you to stay unhealthy so that they have someone to be unhealthy with. Don't mistake support for empathy. Don't think that by sharing food you are getting support; you could find yourself getting caught up in someone else's pity party. That is not the objective.

If you receive good support from friends and are a good support to others, you would be surprised how well you will do. I understand that there will be days that you will not give or receive perfect support, but calm yourself in the moment and think about your self-talk. Get into control by using your Distraction Techniques. Remind yourself why it is important to be healthy. Receive support from friends and, in turn, be a coach and a great example!

If your support system is less than desirable, perhaps it is important at least to talk with your friends and let them know how happy it would make you if you had someone on your side to support you in reaching your goals. If you feel that your friends may unconsciously or inadvertently sabotage all of your efforts to control your food intake, you may want to limit your time with them until you feel more comfortable around situations where you may be tempted to abandon your program.

Don't manipulate friends' support. They are there for you. More than family or work relationships, friends may be the most susceptible to our manipulations because, out of friendship, they want to please us and not feel they have over-stepped the boundaries of good friendship. There are special challenges in asking friends to support you—be

sensitive and be aware of them! But also be aware of the gift of a friend's support; it may be the most precious gift you own or can give.

Do you and friends always gather around food? When you are with friends, keep busy with activities and projects that don't involve food until you feel more confident of staying in control. Plan getting together after dinner or for coffee instead. Enjoy your friendships, but also remember the pain associated with eating unhealthy versus breathing easier about your relationship with food. Keep your friendships refreshing and supportive!

Here are some self-discovery questions that can guide you in knowing what support from friends you need and what kind of support will work best for you:

What support strategies do you need from your friends?

What is your self-talk about receiving support from your friends?

What positive self-talk will benefit you in terms of receiving support from friends?

What are your strategies for your friends who also need support?

Do you have an aggressive food pusher in your life? List some strategies and ideas that can help you cope successfully with this situation.

Transfer these ideas and strategies into your Operator's Manual.



An Ending And A Beginning

This is the end of your self-discovery journal, but just the beginning of your self-discovery journey! Go back to the beginning of this journal and remember how you felt before you started reading Oxygen Mask. Re-read all the entries you've made that describe your feelings and needs, and compare them with where you are now. Write your observations below:

Before writing in this journal, how did I feel and look? What did I experience?

How do I feel and look now? What am I experiencing now?

How do I describe my self-talk now?

Create a visual image for when you achieve your goal. Describe it.

Transfer these observations into your Operator's Manual.

Are you surprised about what you have achieved and the changes you have made? I'm not. I know my *Oxygen Mask* method works. Why? Because it is all about you and your plan to take care of yourself first so that *you* are healthy and able to take care of other people in your life who mean the most to you. This journaling system is your strategy for success— because it is all about YOU: written for *you* by *you*!

I hope that in writing in your *Oxygen Mask Journal* and your *Operator's Manual* you now realize that you do have all the answers within yourself. As always, when you are faced with new challenges and awareness, be gentle with yourself, feel free to take a break from your head.

One day at a time. You took time to get here—make this return to health a wonderful journey. Don't fight it; go with what comes up for you! Celebrate your successes without food. You've learned how to give yourself new rewards, to find new gratifications and healthy indulgences. You've discovered a new habit of positive self-talk, developed new plans, and reviewed old and new strategies!

This is a journey, and you are the author of your *Oxygen Mask Journal* and your *Operator's Manual*—just as you are the author of your own life.

Keep going: alter the journal as you need to, keep up the positive self-talk, be aware, and always: plan. *Enjoy yourself* and who you are, explore a new world where you breathe easier about your relationship with food. You are empowered with self-knowledge and the ability to apply your plan and your strategies. Keep your *Operator's Manual* with you, read it, enrich your strategies, and most of all—BREATHE!

Here are a few final examples of strategies and hints to encourage you on your journey to health and success:

- Unless you have a great deal of weight to lose and you can't get through with the clothing you have, wait to buy smaller-sized clothing until you reach your goal.
- Alter some classic pieces you already own until you achieve your goal weight, or depending on how much weight you plan to lose, buy only one or two outfits to make it through this transition time until you reach your goal.
- Get rid of your larger-sized clothing. Donate the clothes or put them in a second-hand shop or consignment store. Buy some of your clothing there as well—you might find some wonderful outfits there while you transition to your goal weight!
- For motivation, go through your closet and organize your clothing from the largest size to the smallest size. Have fun with your closet as you progress through the sizes from large to small. Make certain articles of clothing mini goals.
- Hang outfits that you are almost ready to fit into in front of your bedroom door so you physically have to walk past them in the morning and night. These “goal outfits” will remind you of what you are doing.
- Write notes containing positive self-talk and affirmative statements. Stick them all over the house to remind yourself about your goals. Write your goals on the notes as well.

- Wear slightly tighter fitting clothing to remind you on a regular basis that you need to eat better to stop being uncomfortable. Even go to the extreme of putting on a slightly tight bathing suit under your clothing for the day to keep you motivated. When you get too comfortable is when you are more likely to eat incorrectly. This is funny but works!
- Picture yourself 5 or 10 pounds lighter—or 20 pounds lighter! Go to the grocery store and purchase a 5, 10, or 20 pound bag of potatoes and put them in a backpack. If your back health will allow it, carry this potato-filled pack around for a day. Feel the relief at the end of the day when you take off that backpack. See what shedding those pounds can feel like? Pounds not lost only to be found again—you've rid yourself of those pounds for good!
- Tell yourself that with willingness, awareness, positive self-talk, planning, strategies, and most of all, with your *Oxygen Mask Journal* and your *Oxygen Mask Operator's Manual* you can reach your goal!
- Visualize yourself at your goal weight, what will your body feel like then? Your body will definitely feel different. Even 10 pounds makes a difference. Similarly, eating well and doing exercise will make you feel better if you are maintaining your goal weight. Visualize your sense of well-being as a person who can breathe easier in your relationship with food.

What other hints are you going to try?

The online *Oxygen Mask Strategy Book* contains many other strategies for success from my readers. If you are interested in sharing some of your strategies, go to **www.o2mask.com** and be a part of the Oxygen Mask Strategy Book!

Energy, great thoughts, motivation, and an overall sense of well-being are the rewards of using the methodology and strategies outlined in this book. You have only to visualize yourself at your goal weight and know that you are the author of your own success. How will your clothing fit? What will it feel like to make wise food decisions? How empowering is it to feel that you are not only making wise choices when it comes to food and eating, but that these are your choices!

Keep going! I will be cheering you on!

