

## Our Relationship With Food: Taking A Look Inward

By Mary Jo Kurtz

It's a complex relationship that we have with food. Food has always been at the heart of the way we nurture and love ourselves and others. It is nourishment for our bodies and a form of love we give ourselves. We also use it to express our love in social situations, celebrations, and our family meals. Unfortunately, food can also be used to fill a void and this can create bad habits. We are often unaware of the reasons that cause us to eat other than for hunger. Only YOU can evaluate harmful behaviors and make small changes over time. To find out, keep a written log of what you eat, when, where, and what were you feeling. Be honest with yourself.

Look for these clues:

- ✓ You eat when you're bored, lonely, stressed or depressed.
- ✓ You eat while multi-tasking such as watching television, at your desk, driving the car.
- ✓ You eat at the same time each day whether you are hungry or not.
- ✓ You always eat when with one particular person or group of people.
- ✓ Certain foods trigger you to lose control and over eat.
- ✓ You engage in eating binges
- ✓ You have rigid rules about food; For example only certain foods are allowed versus foods that are forbidden.

If you answered yes to any of these questions you may consider trying to change your behaviors. This awareness will now allow you to create a plan. Here are our suggestions:

- Identify the trigger.

Determine if it is a certain feeling or person, place or situation that prompts you to eat.

- Have a plan for when a trigger occurs.

You can substitute an activity like renting a video, getting a manicure, or taking a long leisurely walk or bath.

- Substitute other foods for unhealthy choices

Be prepared and have healthy choices available.

- Avoid the trigger.

Plan ahead. Now that you have identified the trigger, determine if there isn't a way to keep it from happening. For example, many people find it difficult when they get home from work. They are so hungry that they end up eating a bag of chips or other unhealthy

snack while preparing dinner. Instead, try to have a healthy snack such as a banana or yogurt before you leave the office.

- Find a buddy.

Think about someone who might support you in these changes. Consider friends or family members that you can ask for help. If no one comes to mind, investigate a support group or a personal life coach!

- Consider a detox or cleansing program.

Many people believe that the experience of a cleansing or detox program is the first step in creating "mindful" eating behaviors.