

Overcoming the Fear of Being Deprived Again

If you have a history of always cutting back or dieting, or your parents consistently limited the amount of food you could eat as a child, you may be food deprived. Fear of deprivation often leads to overeating. Read on to understand and overcome this eating influence.

What is Deprivation?

Dieting, cutting back, self-imposed food restrictions or excessive parental regulation of eating during childhood leads to feelings of deprivation related to food. If you are food-deprived you may feel as though you are prohibited from eating things you like, even if that prohibition is self-imposed. You may feel punished, that you don't have the right or are not allowed, that you shouldn't and that you don't deserve to eat the foods you like because they may be high in calories or low in nutrition. If you do eat the prohibited foods, you often feel shame, tremendous guilt, bad, unworthy, and undeserving.

Childhood Food Regulation

How your parent(s) reacted to your eating when you were a child may still determine your relationship with food today. If your parent(s) were concerned about your weight when you were a child, they may have restricted the types and amounts of foods you ate. Maybe they limited you to two cookies when you really wanted more or slapped your hand when you reached for seconds. Perhaps they made fat faces to you when you snacked on chips or candy. If any of these parental reactions seemed familiar, you may have been deprived as a child. Unfortunately, the feelings of childhood food deprivation often stay with us into adulthood.

Self-Imposed Deprivation

If you have chronically dieted or restricted certain foods to control your weight as an adult, you may have caused your own deprivation. Calorie control in this manner leaves you feeling deprived in most cases. The result is chronic overeating at meals and at snack-times when you aren't dieting. When you have access to restricted foods you usually overeat. This occurs because you fear that another restriction or diet is around the corner. So you eat more food than you need now because of that fear. As you can see, the result of food restrictions is not usually nutritious eating and reasonable amounts of high calorie/low nutrition foods. Typically, you end up disliking nutritious foods and overeating the foods that have been prohibited in the first place.

If you feel as though you overeat because of deprivation, childhood or self-imposed, then consider the following technique for overcoming those feelings at mealtimes or snack-times. Using pasta as an example:

- Prepare and fill your plate with more pasta than you could possibly consume at one meal.
- Bring the whole pot of pasta to the table with you.
- Allow yourself to eat as much as you desire, telling yourself that you deserve to enjoy the foods you like.
- Repeat this process at every meal or snack. The key is to continually serve yourself a large amount of food.
- It is normal to overeat at the beginning of this process. After all, you are recovering from perhaps years of deprivation. However, it is very important that you don't react by swearing you'll go on a diet again next week. This will make you fearful again and re-start the cycle of overeating.

Have faith! This tactic gives the message that you're never going to deprive yourself of food again. You will eventually stop eating at satisfaction because you know that you are allowed to eat as much as you desire!

Apple Promotions, *Weight & Eating Management Handouts v. 2*, <http://www.applepromotions.com>, 2000