

## WEIGHT LOSS FROM THE INSIDE OUT – Part Two

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Last month we began to explore the reasons that people tend to overeat and why they continually struggle with maintaining weight loss ([WEIGHT LOSS – Part One](#)). This month we will look at what needs to happen in order for you to take off weight and keep it off.

Hopefully you have begun to pay attention to your eating patterns over this past month and have learned some things about yourself in the process. Perhaps you weren't able to make connections between your overeating and your feelings or the events in your life. Perhaps you just weren't able to bring yourself to focus in and pay attention to it. That's OK, and know that you are likely not alone. Learning to listen to and pay attention to what's going on inside, especially when you are not used to it or have been actively avoiding it, is not an easy task.

So what needs to happen to really break these habitual eating patterns? First, of course, you will need to gain an understanding of why you chronically overeat (for comfort and nurturing, to detach from uncomfortable feelings and situations, to avoid intimacy, to keep a distance from your sexuality and sexual feelings, to express anger – see [Part One](#) for a more thorough discussion.) You need to know that there is no quick fix here. The emotional issues that lead to chronic overeating are usually long standing. Working through them therefore takes time. Be patient with yourself and with the process.

In addition, you will need to develop a new set of skills. These skills include:

- ◆ learning a new repertoire of feeling words so that you can figure out what it is that you are feeling.
- ◆ learning to acknowledge and claim these feelings, to yourself.
- ◆ learning to express those feelings to others, and appropriately, so that you no longer need to stuff them or numb out with food.
- ◆ learning how to listen to your body's internal cues that have long been ignored. These signals give you important information about how you are feeling, both physically and emotionally.
- ◆ learning to establish and maintain close relationships with others. In doing this, you can let go of food as your primary relationship for soothing and companionship.

You will also need to find new ways to nurture your body other than food. Some possibilities to consider are:

- ◆ bubble baths
- ◆ massage
- ◆ facials/manicures/pedicures
- ◆ using scented lotions on your body – applying them in a nurturing way
- ◆ healthy eating
- ◆ exercise
- ◆ adequate sleep/naps

- ◆ attending to (vs. ignoring) your medical problems

So where do you go to get help with developing these new skills? There are lots of possibilities. Most importantly, find someone to talk to, someone you can trust and who truly understands the issues you are dealing with. It will be especially helpful to talk with a professional who is trained in this area. You can do that through individual or group therapy. You can join a support group. You can join programs like Overeaters Anonymous. It is often very helpful to talk with others who are dealing with the same issues as you. It helps you realize that you are not alone.

Here are some other helpful suggestions:

- ◆ Read, get familiar with the issues at hand. Go the bookstore and browse, search the web. There is a book company, Gurze books, that specializes in eating disorders and eating issues. You can find them at [www.bulimia.com](http://www.bulimia.com), or call them at 800-756-7533 for a catalog.
- ◆ Journal. Let yourself explore your eating patterns. Write about how you were feeling or what you were thinking when you binged today or ate anxiously or mindlessly. Make a list of feeling words. Explore your new relationship with your feelings and with others.
- ◆ Use creative outlets to express what is trapped inside of you. This can be done through art, movement, or music. Do it on your own. Take a class. Or find a therapist who specializes in these areas.
- ◆ Meditate.
- ◆ Pray.

Remember, this is a journey. It was a long time in the making and will probably be a long time in the healing. But persevere, be patient, have faith. In time, as you can begin to break these habitual ways of eating and relating to food, and find healthier ways to get nurtured and supported, you will begin to feel better about yourself and how you relate to your world.

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