No matter how many years or decades you’ve been overeating or how many
diets have failed you (notice I didn’t say that you failed on the diets but that they failed you!), you can learn how to become a “normal” eater—eating when you’re hungry, choosing satisfying foods, remaining aware and enjoying food, and stopping when you’re full or satisfied. To do so, you will have to be focused like a laser and persistent like a dog digging for a bone, not expect overnight success, switch your attention from the scale to your appetite, and learn effective life skills to manage stress and distress.

I’ve taught hundreds of disregulated eaters how to eat “normally” and I can teach you! Here are 50 tips to speed you on your way…

Self-Talk
1. Look in the mirror daily and tell yourself you can learn the skills of “normal” eating.
2. Instead of thinking there are “good” and “bad” foods, consider them as nutritional or non-nutritional (“good” and “bad” are moral terms that are best avoided in the food arena).
3. Don’t put yourself down for the mistakes you make with food. Rather, lavishly praise yourself for all your successes, even the tiniest ones.
4. If experience tells you that diets don’t keep your weight off, don’t try to convince yourself you should be dieting. Instead, give yourself points for trying a different approach.

5. Never say anything to yourself you wouldn’t say to a young child you love, including calling yourself stupid, hopeless, bad, a failure, worthless. Be your own cheerleader by generating positive thoughts about your progress.

6. Avoid all-or-nothing thinking and using words like never and always. Remind yourself that most of life is not black and white, but gray.

7. Detoxify negative things people say about you that are untrue rather than repeating them to yourself. Remember that what people say belongs to them, not to you, even if your name is attached to their words.

8. Ask yourself often how you are feeling so you can become connected to your emotions, but ask only with curiosity not condemnation.

9. Stop judging yourself harshly and start developing self-compassion. Treat yourself lovingly and practice speaking to yourself with extreme esteem.

10. Do not keep telling yourself that learning to be a “normal” eater is hard because saying so only programs you to find the work difficult. Instead, substitute the words challenging or doable.

**Hunger**

11. Check in with yourself often to see how hungry you are using descriptions such as not hungry, moderate, very, famished or a 1-10 scale.

12. Every time you think about food, ask yourself if you’re really hungry enough to eat.
13. Experiment with eating smaller meals more frequently.

14. Consider your hunger as a signal that you need fuel, not that you have to go out and seek the most fantastic eating experience of your life.

15. Practice believing that hunger is for fuel and pleasure, not for meeting emotional needs.

Choosing Satisfying Foods

16. Don’t get hung up on what other people are eating, but ask yourself what you would like to eat.

17. Remind yourself that foods fall on a nutritional continuum (high value/low value), not on a moral continuum (good/bad).

18. Never eat without stopping to consider what you want first. Spend time making a satisfying choice.

19. Refrain from allowing guilt or shame to contaminate your eating decisions.

20. Don’t eat foods you don’t find satisfying because they’ll remind you of being on a diet.

Eating with Awareness and Enjoyment


22. Chew every mouthful thoroughly to release flavor.

23. Let food sit on your tongue to let your taste buds absorb flavor.

24. When you’re talking, stop eating and when you’re eating, stop talking.
25. Stay connected to your body’s appetite signals while you’re eating.

26. Push away guilt and shame while you’re eating and focus on sensory pleasure.

27. Pause while you’re eating to see how you’re feeling about your food in terms of quality and quantity.

28. Stop eating when flavor pleasure declines as it will after a while.

29. Rather than being determined to polish off all of the food in front of you, seek the moment when flavor peaks and you feel an internal “Ah” of satisfaction—and stop.

30. Keep asking yourself while you’re eating, “Am I full?” and “Am I satisfied?”

**Stopping When You’re Full or Satisfied**

31. Think of full as being enough food (fuel) in your belly and satisfied as being the high point of pleasure.

32. Quantify fullness and satisfaction with numbers or words such as nearly, too, just or a 1-10 scale.

33. When you feel full or satisfied, focus on that sensation and broadcast it to your whole body.

34. When you’re done eating, put down utensils, push away your plate, get up—do whatever you need to do to disconnect yourself from the food.

35. Make sure you’re not focusing on the food that’s left and believing you have to finish it or clean your plate. You decide when enough is enough.
Beliefs to Change

36. From “I need to diet to lose weight” to “Diets don’t work long term.”

37. From “This is too hard” to “I can learn to do this over time.”

38. From “This will take too long” to “If I don’t change now, I’ll only be back in this same place again so I might as well get going on it.”

39. From “Losing weight is the most important thing” to “I will lose weight if I honor my appetite and learn to eat ‘normally.’”

40. From “I am bad/worthless/ugly if I’m overweight,” to “I accept my body as it is and will still try to improve it.”

Stopping Emotional Eating

41. When you have the urge to eat when you’re not hungry, ask yourself what you might be feeling.

42. Remind yourself that feelings need a different response than food.

43. Get to know what emotions trigger unwanted eating—boredom, loneliness, anxiety, shame, guilt, disappointment, helplessness—and then learn better ways of dealing with them.

44. Keep a feelings log so you know what’s going on inside of yourself all day long.

45. Reduce stress which will lessen frustration, helplessness, and feeling overwhelmed.

46. Make sure you’re taking care of yourself as least as well as you take care of others.
47. If you find yourself eating when you’re upset, don’t be hard on yourself. Be compassionate and curious and consider your behavior a learning experience.

48. Get help through therapy if you have a history of trauma or abuse, as there is a strong correlation between such a history and emotional eating.

49. Be responsible for yourself and don’t blame others for your emotional eating.

50. Tell yourself that you can bear any emotion, practice doing so, and you’ll be amazed at the emotional muscle you’ll build.

Need more help? Read my books—NICE GIRLS FINISH FAT, THE RULES OF “NORMAL” EATING, and THE FOOD AND FEELINGS WORKBOOK—which are available on line and in your local bookstore.

- Join my message boards at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/foodandfeelings and http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nicegirlsfinishfat
- Read my blogs at http://www.eatingdisordersblogs.com/healthy
- Contact me for a consultation and treatment plan at 941-379-9849 or kkoeniglicsw@comcast.net