

Trance Eating

Our American life-style is faster than ever before. Today, more than 25 million Americans work more than 49 hours each week. 11 million spend 60 hours or more at work each week (*Bureau of Labor Statistics*). Because of the number of hours put in by Americans we have earned the dubious distinction of being the most overworked nation in the industrialized world. Electronic devices and computers clutter our days and family time with more activities, so today multi-tasking is the norm. How else could we get it all done? Because of over-crowded schedules many of us don't have time to cook healthy meals or eat at the table with family, to connect.

It's no wonder many adults and children go into a trance state and are not fully present in life. This trance state originates from being overwhelmed and over-stimulated with tasks or emotions. When we get overwhelmed we increase the multitasking, or we dissociate in our minds by escaping into electronic devices (i.e. iPod, TV, telephone, computer, etc.) and/or by over eating, or other addictions. This unfocused state can be troublesome to those who are doing what I call "Trance Eating". Currently, 64.5% of U.S. adults, age 20 and older are overweight and 30.5% are obese. Severe obesity prevalence is now 4.7%. Approximately 127 million adults in the U.S. are overweight, 60 million obese and 9 million severely obese. 15% of U.S. children and teens are considered overweight and another 15 % of kids are at-risk of becoming overweight. Disease and death rates are rising due to our increased overweight population.

Trance eating is *Unaware Eating*. When we don't slow down, focus and become aware of what's happening in our bodies and minds we are unable to know the basic facts about ourselves, such as "am I hungry" or not. Since I specialize in eating issues, I teach people just how important it is to be present in the moment and to become aware of what they're feeling emotionally, physically and mentally. This allows people to be more aware of their current state so they become more in control of their eating behaviors and food choices. I help people remember that we are human beings not "human doings".

How To Come Out Of Trance Eating

1. Ask yourself what type of hunger am I having? If it's not physical hunger, is my **mouth** hungry? Are my taste buds yearning for something? If so, try taking a taste of something and holding it in your mouth, allowing your taste buds to be satiated with the luxury of the taste. Drink in the taste, wallow in it, become fully present in the moment with the small bite of food so you can enjoy each second. Do not watch TV, talk on the phone or multi-task to distract yourself from enjoying each moment of this treat. SLOOOOOWWWWWLY enjoy the taste. Stretch out the experience as long as you possibly can. Perhaps you only need a spoonful of honey or one grape. Just allow the food to remain in your mouth, melting, disintegrating, on your tongue and enjoy each detail in each SLOOOOOWWW moment and be 100% aware with this personal experience.
*If you are a sugar addict, sugary items might be too stimulating for you to use as they might trigger a binge. So try using a nut or an olive or a cherry tomato, etc.
2. Are you at: Level 1 hunger – I'm beginning to feel hungry. Level 2 hunger -- I need to eat Right Now. Level 3 hunger – I'LL EAT ANYTHING IN SIGHT – GET OUT OF MY WAY!! Realize the further up the levels of hunger you allow yourself to go = the less control you'll have over your eating. So try to plan ahead and be aware of your body sensations, mental thoughts and feelings.
3. Is my stomach hungry? Check and see. Bring your attention to your stomach area, touch your stomach to define where it is, if necessary. If you have just eaten, ask if the sensation is an emotional feeling in your stomach. Or maybe it's a yearning to nurture yourself. Ask your body what it really wants. To be nurtured? To feel a feeling? Am I restless, bored? Sometimes boredom means you are not multitasking any more, and this may feel unnatural, but it is a healthy thing for you to give yourself some down time. Use this time to relax, meditate, listen to relaxing music or guided imagery CDs. If you find an emotional feeling, try feeling the feeling (feeling is healing). Or nurturing yourself in another healthy way. Try postponing the eating for 5 minutes – do diaphragm breathing for 3-5 minutes (the average time it takes for most cravings to dissipate). If you have to eat, eat healthy foods with awareness and SLOWLY enjoy each and every morsel.
4. Am I hungry or am I experiencing Habit or Ritual eating? Ritual eating is comprised of patterns of behaviors we have used for many years. Perhaps they even go back to our childhood. These patterns of eating are associated with people we work with, friends or relatives who we eat with each day, week, month, season. (i.e. every week you have a

board meeting and there is always a table full of carbohydrates, sweets & caffeine).

If you know beforehand you are going to a place where habit/ritual eating will take place try to eat something healthy before to take the edge off your hunger, like an apple. Then visualize and imagine yourself at this place, Eating no food, or small, healthy portions of food. When you get there, check your stomach again to see if it's hungry. If not, realize this may be just a ritual for you. Perhaps you're with other people who graze on unhealthy foods in a group setting. Try to be the leader – make a statement (aloud if you can), identifying that this food is not very healthy food and you know your body will feel better if you don't eat the amount or the type of food that you ritualistically used to eat. Take your attention to your stomach area and say “I know this food is not nutritious and I'm going to respect you and not eat it, or limit my intake”.

Imagine visualizing yourself again, selecting small portions and hear the words “Wise Choice” in your head. Knowing your body will feel better after resisting the chemicals that are in the unhealthy foods. If you decide to eat some of the ritual food, consciously select carefully, eat slowly and then Enjoy it. The more you slow down to create focused awareness and calm, the more control you will have over your eating. If you are unable to follow these suggestions after practicing, you may need extra support/expertise with your goals. Many people find working individually or in a group with me helps them to come out of their trance, change negative habits and lose weight.