

Put the fork down – it will lead to weight loss

By Robert S. Wood

I've found an easy offbeat painless strategy for losing weight and staying slim without dieting. If you've tried everything else – with poor results – you might give this a whirl.

I credit a simple combination of often overlooked strategies to satisfy hunger, but avoid the overeating that puts on pounds. Plus, I've discovered a devilish hidden psychological barrier to weight loss – and found a way to sneak around it.

Nutritionists tell us flat out that we eat too much and too fast. Overeating results in weight gain. So why do we do it? Shrinkers say overeating is a powerful lifelong habit, instilled at infancy by well-meaning parents who were afraid our tiny bodies wouldn't grow up strong and healthy if they didn't make us eat and eat.



Paying attention to food intake can help keep pounds off. Photo/CNN

As we grew older, their pleading, bribing and cajoling turned to hounding, bullying and threatening. They thought that was their job, inherited from their parents. As impressionable

kids, we were shamed into cleaning our plates and told that wasting food was a sin when half the world's children were going hungry. (Dubious logic, but it worked.)

"They can have my squash and liver," I often grumbled, but it didn't sell.

Considering that pressure, no wonder we all have food hang-ups, eating neuroses, even food psychoses. And obesity in kids and adults is steeply on the rise. No wonder diets don't work, and we still helplessly, dutifully clean our plates, unwilling to risk that remembered shame and guilt. Shrinks tell us that death is often preferable to acute embarrassment for many people. It's that strong.

They say that constantly reinforced demands, beginning in infancy, enforced with punishment, threats and fear of disgrace, become so deeply embedded that they continue to dictate, often unconsciously, for the rest of our lives unless we unearth and examine them, and consciously decide to kick them.

That's what I decided to do.

After discovering that cleaning my plate like a good little boy often led to feeling uncomfortably stuffed, bloated for hours, feeling sluggish and dull, my pants too tight, it dawned on me that I was somehow eating more than I wanted and eating when I wasn't even hungry. It was quite a revelation.

Clearly, eating when you're not hungry is bone dumb. So why did I do it?

Like many others, I was following imperial orders hammered into me by my parents, seemingly from birth. As a young adult, I reveled in eating freedom, but as the years passed the old entrenched clean-your-plate habit returned, and I began to put on unwanted pounds.

When I realized what was happening, I began to extensively experiment with eating less and I did some research. I read in a scientific report that there's a proven distinct time gap – often 20 long minutes – between when our stomachs are full and when the fullness registers in our brains. They called it “Gap Eating.”

That's huge because one can eat a lot in 20 minutes. And most of us obliviously keep eating after we're already full but don't yet consciously know it. And that disastrous habit dependably puts on the pounds and stubbornly keeps them there.

So I devised a strategy for combating Gap Eating. First I resigned from the “Clean Plate Club.” Next I learned to take small bites and I eat sloooowly. Sometimes, if I'm dangerously ravenous, I slow myself down by taking a breath or two or even three between every swallow as the eating experts advise.

I also remind myself of the utter foolishness of Gap Eating, and I wait for the realization coming from my gut by way of my brain that I'm no longer hungry. It's all about developing some appetite self-awareness.

As I eat, I often mentally check my hunger level. If it's gone, I stop eating, cold turkey, right now; even with a forkful halfway to my mouth. No kidding. Ask my wife.

I refuse to swallow another bite even if there's just one more forkful on my plate because I know that eating when I'm no longer hungry is dumb, puts on hard-to-get-rid-of pounds, and adds no extra salivary satisfaction or nutrition.

Those millions of starving children can't make me feel guilty anymore because my leftovers really can't help them. They just go in the fridge for later.

That's my strategy for avoiding disastrous Gap Eating. For me, it beats restrictive dieting, or taking expensive stomach-bloating pills, or undergoing invasive gut surgery – most of

which aims to do the very same thing – make you feel full so you stop eating. Instead, I use my brain and developed awareness.

By stopping Gap Eating you can eat what you want without hunger or feeling stuffed or gaining extra weight. It's worked for me to stay slim or lose weight for decades. It's become a good habit so I don't even think about it anymore. If other strategies haven't worked, you might give it a try.

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