

Hypnotherapy to replace Food and Body Obsession with Natural Healthy Eating

I am very often contacted by clients seeking help with weight loss or eating disorders. We have a chat about their relationship with food and their body image. They are often quite aware that they are totally obsessed with their weight and dieting. They have very strong ideas about what they should and should not eat; some of them are professionals in the weight management or health industry, they are personal trainers, naturopaths, dieticians, and weight consultants. They are very upset by their “laziness” and secret eating habits. They usually say they need strong will power and control, as they constantly break their dieting rules and other healthy living regimes. They want me to force them to restrict their food, to stick to their regime, to control their thoughts.

There is a better way to lose weight and to overcome eating disorders than dieting and control. There is no need for force, no need for restrictions, no need to be obsessed, no need for food to rule our lives. We can use hypnotherapy to return to our nature and to implement natural healthy eating habits. The body naturally knows how to be healthy; the body naturally knows how to maintain its healthy weight. The body naturally makes us hungry when it needs food, the body makes us crave what it needs, and the body is naturally using its fat storage for energy when it is needed.

Unfortunately, we do not live naturally anymore, we do not listen to our bodies, and we usually lose the natural connection between the body and mind very early in childhood. There are many reasons; we are bombarded with food advertisements from a very early age, the food is used as a reward, we are given sweets to cheer us up when we are upset, or we have to eat the food we hate because “it is good for you”. Once the natural eating is forgotten, we usually tend to overeat and we try to control eating, we start dieting, we start developing the obsession with food and the body.

There are many levels and many symptoms of the body and food obsession. In our culture there is more and more significance attached to the good look, to the body image, and especially to being slim. The media are full of beautiful bodies, full of all kind of diets, fashion, styles; the “body” industry is booming, starting with the health and slimming clubs, special programs on TV, supermarkets are full of all sorts of “health food”. Who is not affected? The obsession may be restricted just to looking slim, but it is usually extended to the signs of aging and all other aspects of body image. There is a new medical and dental industry, performing expensive and risky medical procedures to look younger, to change the body shape, even just to style the body parts.

The body image obsession can sometimes become very disturbing and it can completely take over the person’s life, causing overwhelming negative feelings.

The obsession of being slim is very often associated with food obsession and eating disorders. The symptoms consist of constantly thinking about your body, judging yourself or others (and feeling being judged) by the look and especially by weight, feeling guilty about your look, avoiding social situations, covering your body, depression, constant checking of your weight, constant checking the amount of fat on your body, comparing yourself with others all the time. Very often the obsession leads to the distorted self image; it is like looking at yourself in a bent mirror in the amusement park. It is very common for young, beautiful girls to focus on one aspect of their body and to see themselves as ugly. In extreme cases the person can be dangerously underweight, but still seeing herself as fat.

Food obsession usually forms together with the obsession about the body image and weight. Children are exposed to this food obsession from a very young age; there is always somebody in the family dieting and commenting on what they should not be eating. There is a lot of food around and children may tend sometimes to eat more than they need. They might put on weight and in our weight obsessed world it will be noticed straight away, they can hear comments, they may be called names. They may start dieting; parents may start restricting food as they want their children to be slim and happy. The vicious circle starts. Restrictions and dieting make us think more about food, we try different diets, we make ourselves starve and then we lose the will power and we overeat. The world around is full of confusing information, there is such abundance of food, every label and advertisement trying to promote each item as healthy and delicious, food shows, cook books sold as bestsellers, all those colorful food displays and packaging. And everybody seems to diet and be concerned about healthy eating. Everybody is an expert on “what is good for you”. There are scientific researches, sometimes contradictory, there are medical advices, there is also a big complementary health industry focusing on food supplements and detoxifying diets not necessarily founded on research.

We are all a bit over occupied with food. Most of us try to restrict our food and follow diets from time to time, and we may be disappointed when we cannot follow the restrictions for long. But sometimes the food obsession becomes so strong, that it takes over the entire life. There is constant thinking about food, either planning the next meal, or planning some rules and diets. The happiness is connected with food and being able to control the food intake; each breaking of rules brings an enormous guilt and self hate. The stronger the rules and restrictions, the more difficult it is to follow them. Sometimes the result is a yo-yo dieting, when there is a pattern of successful weight loss followed by gaining more weight when the restrictions become too difficult. Sometimes the person follows very strict diet rules during the day with a big food binge in the evening. There are different patterns of overindulging and restrictive diets, and more serious eating disorders may form. The food obsession can become so strong, that the person can show signs of phobia when it comes to specific “bad” food. I have had clients who would shake when talking about chocolate or even bread.

Clients can also develop physical reactions to some food, the most common is constipation or upset bowel, also headaches etc. Sometimes they believe they have specific food intolerance, and they are obsessed about these foods and cannot stop eating them at the same time.

There are reasons why some people are only mildly affected by the body and food obsession and for some it becomes a major issue and the source of absolute misery and depression. We all always deal with our lives the best way we can and we find the best solutions we can to cope with various difficult situations. The obsession with body and food and the eating disorder is usually just a copying mechanism. Sometimes there are some traumatic events in our lives and it is easier to have other strong distractions and to think about body and food instead. Sometimes we may feel lonely and abandoned; sometimes there could be some very strong fears or other emotions. The reasons of obsession can be rooted in early childhood, but very often it starts at puberty or is triggered by some events in our adult lives. These feelings and emotions could be too strong and too frightening, we may feel too insecure to deal with them and it is easier to be obsessed with food and body.

The most important part of overcoming the body and food obsession is to remember the very simple truth that it is nobody's fault, and especially not yours. Life is just difficult at the moment and you found the way to cope. However, you can find a better way. The first step is to realize that you are living in the current moment, in the now, not in the past. Whatever the past was, we cannot live in the past, and yet we tend to stay and dwell on the old stories, and see the past through the eyes of our three years old self, and carry with us the old guilt, old regrets, judgments and beliefs. It changes when you start seeing the past as old stories and lessons, so you can leave the old emotions and unhelpful beliefs where they belong, in the past. The next step is to realize that the fears and worries about the future are not real, as you are never in the future, you just imagine it. Once this is done you are ready for the third step, you can learn to deal with the current situation, you can learn to better handle what happens now, and you are ready to build the natural strength and self confidence. You are free to connect with your body and implement the natural healthy eating.

This all can be done by accessing your internal resources during hypnotherapy. Since we can be only in the now, only in the current moment, we already have inside us much more than we can imagine, all the wisdom and necessary solutions are already within us, in our subconscious mind. During hypnotherapy you will be just accessing your internal resources and replacing the faulty solutions and beliefs with the ones which suit you best. There are no limits to what you can achieve, the only limits are the old beliefs from the past, and you can always change them once you realize that they are not true. There are different techniques which we can use in hypnotherapy to assist with those changes, and there are different levels at which the changes can be made. The changes on the body level involve implementing the natural eating and exercise

habits, there are changes on the thought level, just clearing the mind from the obsessive thoughts and finding other ways to cope with stress and worries. On the emotional level we can learn other ways to deal with emotions, and we can also go to the roots of the difficult emotions and solve them, letting them go completely. We can also access the deepest level, the very source of our being and bring the natural strength coming from the deepest realization of our own roots.

The natural eating habits are very easy to implement in hypnosis. The subconscious mind is the part of the mind which is very closely connected with the body and it steers the body. The body is like a little child; it wants to please us, but it does not know how. When we are stressed or upset, the body feels that there is some treat, some pending disaster, so it stores energy as a fat to protect us. It is enough to connect with our body in hypnosis and ask it to use the body fat as energy. The body happily follows once it understands that we really want it.

There are also two major connections between the body and mind which need to be restored. The first one is the natural hunger. The body knows exactly how much food it needs and it naturally makes us hungry when it needs food. However, we lose this connection early in the childhood and we tend to take other emotions and feelings for hunger. Once the natural connection is restored, we feel physical hunger only when the body needs food. The second connection is about the food choices. The body naturally knows which food and which nutrients it needs. It is natural for our body to make us crave what it needs. When this connection is restored in hypnosis, we crave exactly what the body needs, and the other food becomes boring.

There are also some other changes which need to be done in hypnosis, especially eating very slowly and enjoying the food. Slow eating is essential for the body to realize that it has enough food. It usually takes about twenty minutes for the food to reach all the sensors in the body, so when we eat quickly, we can easily eat twice as much as we need. And when we eat quickly, we just swallow the food without really enjoying it, so even when we are full we feel a bit empty. It is very important to enjoy food, and we can enjoy it more when we eat very slowly and we pay attention to all the senses, especially to aromas and taste. The body notices when it has enough and it produces the joyful satisfaction, so we automatically stop. This is how the body works naturally, so once it is very strongly reinforced in hypnosis, the food obsession dissolves.

The same approach, connecting with the body and applying its natural resources, could be applied to health issues, especially to solving the health issues connected with food intolerances or allergies. It can be also applied to healthy exercise, as the body is naturally enjoying any suitable form of physical exercise.

Enjoyment is very important for anything to work. One of the most important factors to remember is that life is to enjoy, body is to enjoy, food is to enjoy and exercise is to enjoy too. The enjoyments and allowing yourself to enjoy your life and body is one of the most important aspects of all hypnotherapy work in all my sessions. **Enjoyment and freedom to be naturally who you are works and brings happiness. Control and beating yourself on the head, and trying to use the will power against yourself may work for a short period, bringing more distress later.**