

How Do You Escape the Food Trap?

Yes, millions of Americans are hooked—emotionally dependent—on food. What does that mean?

It has nothing to do with your present weight; you may be very overweight or very thin. Rather it has to do with an improper relationship with food in which food and eating have assumed an unnatural importance in your life. In this improper, love-hate relationship, food has an unnatural control over you. You may love the way it tastes and makes you feel, but you hate it for what it does to your body and how it controls your life.

Like any unhealthy relationship, it results in a roller coaster of emotions: gratification and satisfaction, guilt and remorse, being “good” only to be “bad.” The obsession fills your thoughts and actions, robs you of well-being, and affects your self-esteem; it holds you captive. It has life-damaging consequences.

Food is a trap when it is used as a substitute for love, friendship, or success, or when it’s used to cover up more serious emotional issues. Unhealthy eating and overeating can become a way of life and a way of coping with life. And because we must eat for life, we obviously can’t abstain from it as we can from other substances people abuse. Food is quite another story, even for people who have given up smoking.

Food is not inherently evil. Humans must have it to survive and thrive; we are physically dependent upon it. God created us to need food, and He created us to enjoy the taste of food. He also designed the eating of it to be pleasurable while we’re benefiting from its nourishment.

The problems begin when we become emotionally dependent on food to cope with everyday life, when it becomes our source of

joy. Food becomes an evil when we love eating more than we love ourselves, more than we love other people, and more than we love God.

Scripture is full of illustrations about food and gluttony, messages often ignored. Food—and finances—are two vulnerable issues for us because we can't live without them. Many do well in the abstinence issues; denominations are even formed around them. We find strength in abstinence. We can live without alcohol, nicotine, and narcotics—even though withdrawal can be deadly. But food and money are not objects we can abstain from; we must have them to survive.

We must apply the fruit of self-control to them, however, and keep them in their appropriate place—not loving them more than God or more than people. And that's why they become a trap. That's why the Bible calls the love of money the root of all sorts of evil (1 Tim. 6:10)—not because it is inherently evil, but because it can so easily become a lord over our lives. Neither is food inherently evil until it becomes our golden calf.

As Scripture records in Exodus 32, God, Moses, and the top of Mount Sinai seemed too far away for the Israelites waiting in the valley below. Anxious for a quick-fix god that they could see and touch, the Israelites molded a calf of gold.

We likewise turn to food because it's always at hand and gives immediate gratification.

The preceding is an excerpt from the book 201 Secrets to Healthy Living, with various authors. The book can be purchased at , or .