



# Win t

**Does your fridge beckon at night? Is food controlling your life? Try this revolutionary new way of eating that puts you back in control and helps you lose weight. By addiction counsellor Gillian Riley**

**D**o you find it hard to stick to diets? Do you hate the constant counting and weighing, and the thought that you can't eat certain foods? If so, then this weight-loss plan is for you.

Basically, it all hinges on a technique which I developed in my work as an addiction counsellor, helping people to give up smoking. Instead of concentrating on what you eat, you concentrate on the way you think. It's very simple, though that doesn't mean it's easy — changing your life never is. But by taking control, you'll start to eat more sensibly and your weight will regulate naturally.

Chances are that as young children we stopped eating when we were full, something many of us are unable to do as adults — but if you can learn to do that again, you'll be able to throw away your kitchen and bathroom scales and get on with your life.

There's one very simple principle behind my technique, and once you understand it, you'll be able to make it work for you. In short, every action we take is triggered by a thought. If you get your thinking working for you, you'll have more control over what you eat.

You have to think of yourself as a food addict for this to work. This

may be tough — no one likes to see themselves as an addict, but it's the key to "unlearning" the way that you eat.

An addiction represents a particular way of thinking and has three main components. First, you will feel like eating addictively in those circumstances where you ate addictively in the past — when you're bored, perhaps, or feeling down, or at particular times of the day. Once you learn to associate food with those "trigger situations", you'll want to eat every time they occur, regardless of whether you're actually hungry or not.

The good news is that you can forgive yourself for feeling that way. All it means is that you ate addictively in the past. It doesn't mean you're mad, bad or greedy!

Second, the addicted mind always produces a sensible excuse: "One more piece of chocolate won't hurt..." or "eating will cheer me up". Focus on the excuses — or justifications — you use and work towards letting go of some of them. For example, while on my course, Marianne found that many of her excuses were contradictory: she overate when she was stressed because she had a lot to do, and also when she was bored. Excuses are ways of fooling



# The food fight

## YOUR THREE-STEP GUIDE TO TAKING CONTROL

### 1 Realise you have a choice

Choice is probably the most important word in this technique — and the hardest to grasp. Master this and you'll be well on your way.

If, like me, you're a rebel at heart, I suggest you think in terms of freely choosing your food and NOT following the rules. Choosing means you're free to eat anything you want in any quantity you want. Scary? Choosing also means overcoming the fear that if you really are free to eat anything, you'll eat everything. So it means being aware of the consequences — you eat food that enhances your health or you eat food that undermines your health. But it's still your choice.

Feeling genuinely free to choose is a challenge for many of my clients, but the benefits are undeniable. When you really choose, you take control.

### 2 Develop lasting motivation

When it comes to making choices about eating or not eating something, there are two different ways to motivate yourself:

a) **to look better.** This is mainly about what others think of you.

b) **to maintain your health.** This is mainly about what you think of you.

If your motivation is mainly or completely (a), then you're starting from the basis that you don't much like yourself. That does nothing for your self-esteem, and it also means that most of your choices will be negative: "I can't eat that because it'll make me put on weight". But if your motivation is (b), your starting point is that you do like yourself, and so you want to give your body what's best for it. That boosts

your self-respect, which makes it easier to stick to your goals. And it means that you can make many more positive choices: "I want to eat that because it's good for me."

### 3 Learn the technique that works

This technique takes some self-control but effectively gets you out of the addictive way of overeating. Stop dieting immediately — instead use these tools:

#### a) Times

The purpose of the Times is to give you a way to choose to start eating which is less likely to be influenced by your addictive thinking. This is how you use this tool. Whenever you finish eating, whether it's a meal or a snack, set a Time for yourself and aim to get to that Time without eating anything.

My suggestion is that you set a Time at least one hour on from eating, and no more than four hours on. For example, you finish lunch at 1.30pm and you set a Time of 4.30pm. What you have done is to set yourself a goal of not eating anything at all until 4.30pm. Then when 4.30pm comes, you have a choice, either to eat something and then set another Time, or to set another Time without having eaten.

#### b) Plans

The purpose of the Plans is to give you a way to choose when to stop eating that's less likely

to be influenced by addictive thinking.

The idea is to decide what

you intend to eat at that meal, just before you start eating. You decide how many portions, what size portions, how many courses, you plan to eat at this meal. You don't need to weigh any food or measure it exactly, and you don't need to have it all in front of you to start with. But you must have — just before you begin to eat — a mental picture of what it's all going to be.

Of course you always have complete control over choosing what your Times and Plans will be. It makes sense to set a Time when you think you'll be ready to eat

again, but you'll need to learn through trial and error how far apart to set the Times and how much you really need the Plans at each meal.

You'll probably worry that the temptation to set Times at "every hour", and Plans at "all I can eat" will get the better of you — but it won't. The benefit of eating this way is that once you stop letting food control you, it really is possible to take control yourself and eat sensibly. As you gain more and more control over your eating, by setting Times and making Plans, you'll be able to gain a real sense of control over your eating, and as you do you'll learn what to Plan at each meal, so you'll be ready for more food when your next meal is due.



yourself; they are the means by which you become your own enemy. And being your own enemy does nothing for your self-esteem.

Third, you may try to control what you eat by thinking of foods as either "forbidden" or "permitted". Most diets list foods that are allowed and others that aren't, so this way of thinking is very common.

The problem, though, is that you're thinking in terms of following rules. Whenever you're given a rule about anything, there are only

two things you can do: follow the rule or rebel.

There are people who are quite good at following rules. They're probably good at dieting too. But there are also a lot of people who are fed up with following rules, especially about eating. They may give it a try now and then, but eventually they always rebel: "I know I'm not supposed to be eating this, but blow it, I'm going to have it anyway!" If they hadn't banned the food in the first place, that reaction couldn't have happened.

## HOW TO STAY SLIM

### ■ Don't avoid your "trigger situations"

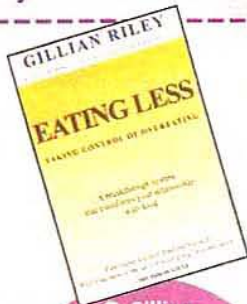
You might lose weight for a while by carefully avoiding all those situations which make you want to eat additively, but as soon as the circumstances return — and your addiction and excuses come along with them — you'll put the weight straight back on again. When it comes to breaking addictive patterns, you can make your greatest advances by facing exactly those situations, rather than by avoiding them.

### ■ Choice

Always remind yourself you have free choice. Otherwise, you'll feel like you've been forced into eating less, which means you'll make up for lost time when you start to feel rebellious.

### ■ Motivation

When looking good is all you care about, your motivation will disappear along with the weight. So focus on reasons to eat less that have to do with other things, such as feeling in control, having more energy and vitality and better digestion.



Gillian Riley holds "Eating Less" courses regularly north London.

020 8996 2497  
0204 444444  
WOMAN'S WEEKLY