



FOOD TRIGGERS

* END YOUR CRAVINGS *
EAT WELL AND LIVE BETTER

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Preface

You Can Stop the Triggers

You were just going to take a taste, but one bite led to more and ended in a pile of leftover wrappers, packages, sacks, and containers. Or you love someone who's living this way. You aren't sure how that first mouthful led to the consumption of an unmentionable amount of something-something, but you don't want to talk about it. You couldn't bear for anyone to know about the gluttony, even though the evidence is right there in the pounds piling on. Whatever you call it—pigging out, bingeing, abusing food, getting a food fix—you pray no one knows about the shameful indulgence as you try to hide the evidence.

The fact is this secret life is not so secret anymore.

It's epidemic.

Any given month in America, between 6 and 15 million people binge out of control, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.¹ Yet nowhere near this many people ever get help. Millions of overeaters never get treatment. Meanwhile, food manufacturers keep introducing new-fangled processed foods designed to be irresistible in taste and texture, with synthetic flavor enhancers. Think about how many new potato chip, soft drink, cookie, cracker, and ice cream favors or brands you've been introduced to in advertisement blitzes in the last month alone.

At risk are people who spend their days and nights obsessing about food and consuming it in voluminous amounts. Or those who don't necessarily obsess but who find themselves in situations that spiral out of control. Or those who go into debt or spend

their last dollars on a carton and container for a fix one day and a new diet plan or program and exercise equipment or regimen the next.

You may be one of those people.

You may be someone who knows and loves one of those people.

Either way, a life is being eaten away. Food is costing something: health, money, relationships, vocation, hobbies, peace.

That's why I wrote this book—because life can be better. You or your loved one can be free from a mad cycle with food. You can eat in healthy ways and focus on things that matter more than a cookie or a chip, a slice of cheesecake or a sliver of pie.

I want you to know there's a reason people pig out, overeat, and find themselves addicted to foods or snacks consumed in an outrageous amount in a single sitting. Contrary to myth, it's not because of being fat and stupid, lazy and indulgent and greedy, or having no willpower or pride. In fact, it takes a lot of work, creativity, and intelligence to hide overeating and binges, food abuse and addiction, from a world that frowns on overweight bodies and links overeating to obesity.

Every day another diet book will tell you the person who overeats just needs to exercise more self-control—or exercise, period—or substitute carrot sticks and celery for cookies and ice cream—or eat in moderation. Every day another program or person will try to convince you life will be better when you're skinny. Such advice couldn't be more disastrous for the person whose brain is hardwired to be triggered by certain foods or who falls prey to foods designed to be addictive. Diets and exercise programs are not remotely the whole answer for how to stop the madness that goes on with overeating, whether on occasion or repeatedly to the point of ruining your life.

There's a bigger picture. And help for you or someone you love hiding the empties, piling on the pounds, obsessing over food (even now and then), and riding the roller coaster of eating and overeating. The basic truths we'll look at together in this book are . . .

- Chemical properties of certain foods, coupled with faulty brain wiring, can contribute to overeating
- You can determine whether you have a trigger issue that is controlled by avoiding certain foods or if you have an addiction to those foods and need a course for recovery.
- There are ways to eat that allow you to make peace with food and yourself and lose weight and find wholeness.

In the chapters that follow, you'll find the science on what's causing this epidemic of overeating and the research on what happens in the body and brain when certain foods trigger the urge to binge. You'll also see practical help on what you can do about it (whether you're the overeater or you love one), hope and encouragement for a better life, and motivation in the true stories of people who are overcoming lives of overeating.

Food doesn't have to cost you your life, dollars, relationships, and dreams—or your passion for a full and abundant way of living.

Many doctors, counselors, scientists, researchers, and therapists are now focusing on this epidemic. They're asking questions like whether the issues are biological or psychological and if the root of the problem is overeating and behavior or hardwiring in

the brain and addiction. They're working to understand why food, something essential to life, as needed and natural as air and shelter or sleep, must sometimes be treated or managed.

The good news is they're finding the answers. There is help.

Recently, I met with a new client about her food struggles, and she said it took her years to get to my office. She tried for most of her life to hide her binges. She's a highly intelligent and successful woman who said she couldn't believe she had gotten to a place where she needed to pay a therapist to talk about food. She was so ashamed she put her face in her hands and began to cry, embarrassed, wanting to hide all over again.

I was moved because I knew what it was like to sit in that chair, my face in my hands in shame. I understood wanting the struggle to disappear, along with the weight and the burden of continuing to lose control.

"You're not alone," I shared, "and you're not beyond help. What if you knew there was a chemical explanation? What if this insanity was a treatable illness? Wouldn't that make a difference in how you felt and approached recovery?"

Immediately my client's tears stopped. She looked up, stunned. She then straightened in her chair, taller, brighter, lighter. It was as if a leaden shawl had been lifted from her shoulders and then her mind and then her very soul. I could almost see my words running through her mind: *Chemical explanation. Treatable. Recovery.*

There *is* a chemical explanation for the binges and overeating patterns. Losing control to a food trigger and food addiction are treatable. You, or the one you love who overeats, can live free.

One thing I know for sure: We are not alone, and God never meant for us to live in agony over what was created to nurture and sustain us. He never meant for us to struggle with food.

So believe that you can end the cycle. Have faith in what you or your loved one's future can be.

I know because I've broken free from the bondage of addictive eating.

You can too.

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