

THE LOSS OF SUBSTANCE: OVEREATING

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In this last blog for this series, I really am on virgin territory. I eat too much and am too attached to food. Period! When I was young, I ate to live and was very skinny. Now I live to eat and am not very skinny. I don't like it, but I have not been moved (properly) to do anything about it yet. Yes, I have tried to lose weight from time to time, but somehow shortly after beginning a diet of any kind it seems that the events of my life somehow manage to distract me and I wake up later and find that I am eating as much as ever, if not more. It is like bad Shamata meditation. I can't keep my focus.

Sometimes I limit myself to a certain size bowl, but before long I have found ways to cram, pile, and stack food in that little bowl that would fill three bowls, and I am right back to where I started. That is how clever I am when threatened with less food. It seems that somehow I always manage to eat more than enough. To me enough is "more than enough."

I know I am not alone in this and that misery loves company, but that is not a great comfort. Who wants to be miserable? And I am not grossly overweight, at least not yet, but I am gaining on it, not losing it. There is a problem here. And unlike the other blogs in this series where I somehow manage to get a handle on my vices, in this case I have none and hope that one of you reading this will startle me awake about all this overeating.

We can probably all agree 'why' we do it. At my age food is one of the few things I look forward to. I am not about to go out and climb a mountain or run a fast mile. I already am tired of the business part of making a living. I work too much as it is, and when work is done, then what? Sure, I might watch a movie or more likely these days 'part of a movie'. It does not much matter what I watch anymore, as long as I watch a little something. And then there is food.

And I am not even a very good cook or, for that matter, very particular about what food I eat. I am interested in finding foods that I like to eat, but not in cooking or perfecting recipes, per se. In a world of professed gourmets, I am (at least I admit it) the lonely gourmand. I like food and lots of it, please. It is not that I am not creative or busy; I am both. I can't seem to remember how I handled this back in the day, for I was busy and creative then too. I really do believe it is as simple as back then I ate to live, and now at least part of me lives to eat. I look forward to eating, as opposed to an eat-and-run approach.

I like to eat a lot. I want a big bowl of pasta, not just enough to live on. And I want to eat for some time, not just for a minute or two. I know I am not alone because where I live all one has to do is go to the local grocery store to see really big people. I am not that big... yet. I am not saying 'you' can't be big and be fine; I am saying I am too big for my frame. It makes me uncomfortable.

Please don't get the idea that I eat junk food or fast food or processed food. Not at all. Back in 1972 I designed the company logo for Eden Foods, one of the pioneers in organic and whole foods and perhaps the last private organic food company not already been acquired by aggregators. I studied and learned macrobiotics and use the principles today. I know what and how to eat.

Thanks to my wife Margaret, we don't eat processed food or food with bad additives in it. Sometimes I do. We eat, as much as possible, fresh and unprocessed foods, organic if they are available, simple or basic foods, foods like Lundgren short-grain brown rice, all kinds of beans, fresh veggies, and so on. The quality of the food I eat is not an issue. The issue is quantity. I like to eat a lot of whatever is being served. I live in fear of the dinner invite where the hosts serve miniscule portions. I want to cut and run out of their house when that happens. In other words, when it comes to eating food I am not a reasonable man. And I know better; at least my mind tells me so, but my stomach and appetites won't listen.

I don't really snack during the day much anymore. I have given up that as a bad bet, but I make up for it with huge portions a dinner time. I tend to eat only two meals a day, breakfast about lunch time or just before (earlier if I am going anywhere or something is happening), and in late afternoon. I don't eat sugar, so deserts for me are usually fresh and dried fruit, and I seek out the sweetness of baked yams and the like. Giving up sugar was a big step and a very rewarding one in terms of shoring up my bodily health. The problem comes down to portion control.

The Yearning for Fat

Before I close this section I should say something about fat intake. There are some of us, and I am one, whose bodies have gotten an idea that we need a certain amount of fat in whatever we eat or we cannot rest, that is: we cannot stop eating. My wife has pointed out to me many times that given a choice of foods, I will always select the ones with the highest fat content, and it is not as simple as tossing me a pound of lard and closing the door. I just naturally seek out foods that are laced with fat. I seldom to never go for foods with a zero fat content. That would be like eating nothing for me.

If it is high in fat than I will be satisfied and stop eating; If it has low to no fat in it, I will keep eating until I find some fat. It could be the fat in certain foods or regular milk instead of low-fat milk, and of course (in the past) ice cream, the richer the better. And perhaps my main source of fat is fat-rich oils and foods cooked or containing oil. I am an oily type by nature. My skin is oily, which makes me tan easily but also probably takes a lot of oil and fat to nourish. Just as some people crave sugar, I seem to crave (quite unconsciously) oil and fat. Once I get some in my system, my hunger goes away. I probably am the only person out there who when they eat bagels with cream cheese butters the bagel first. Butter is the new sugar for fat eaters like me.

Sometimes I just go out in the kitchen and eat a slice of cheese, just because I know it will stop the fat-intake syndrome. So for me I have the twin problems of eating too much and seeking out fat-rich foods. Perhaps one of you out there can post an idea here on how to control portions or better deal with the fat intake problem. These are problems I still struggle with.

There you have it. I have shared this series of substance blogs with you; now it is your turn. Overeating is my last substance vice (that I know of). Help me turn the corner on it.

Tomorrow, I will close with a summary on all this.

