



## **Seven Sneaky Lies that Limit Weight Loss**

Every day we make choices about food. We decide when to say yes and when to say no. For many people, managing self-control with food can be a daily struggle. Even the most health conscious people may face this problem.

Often, we allow enticing mental teasers to give us permission to overeat, when we likely don't want the extra food anyway. We become food-pleasers by listening to these mental teasers, adding unwanted calories and pounds in the process. By changing the way we view these unsolicited invitations to indulge, we can regain control of what we consume and shed pounds too. Here are seven sneaky lies that limit weight loss and the mental tricks you need to handle them.

### **Sneaky Lie: It's free!**

Free samples. Free with purchase. Buy one, get one free. The meal may be free, but who wants *fat* just because it's free? It is not hard to run across opportunities to get more food—often unwanted food—for no charge. These “free” foods add unwanted additional calories to our diet so they are not free after all. We pay for them by carrying around these free foods in and on our bodies.

### **How to handle it**

When faced with a tempting handout, ask yourself: “Would I buy this item if it wasn't free?” Anything that isn't worth your hard earned money isn't worth the added pounds either.

### **Sneaky Lie: Be polite!**

You wouldn't dare turn down your mother-in-law's homemade apple pie would you? That would not be polite. Can you say no when your supervisor's child is determined to sell you three buckets of popcorn? We should be flattered they thought of us in sharing their sweet delights, right? How do we show appreciation for the offering without falling into the trap of being polite to our own detriment? This can be tough since we often associate giving food as a loving and kind gesture, and refusing it as a sign of rudeness.

### **How to handle it**

If you must graciously accept the 900-calorie piece of pie, ask for it to-go. Take it to work, and give it away. Or, offer it to a neighbor or friend. You can still be polite without getting pudgy in the process.

### **Sneaky Lie: Don't waste it!**

There are starving kids all over the world! So, clean your plate or you are wasting food. These are common mental teasers that seduce us into eating more than we should. Yet the logic does not address the real hunger issue other people have. We sometimes feel we should not let a piece of food go into the trash, as this would be a waste. So we eat every last bite at the restaurant or finish off our child's plate to not be wasteful.

### **How to handle it**

Just because you have already paid for the meal, doesn't mean you won't have to pay additionally with the extra calories. You can choose to let the server remove the rest of that big plate of spaghetti and meatballs or you can choose to not "waste it" by seeing it sent straight to your thighs.

### **Sneaky Lie: It's a special occasion!**

Got something to celebrate? It is great to have an attitude of celebration, and finding something special about each day is a healthy approach to living. But we can't truly award ourselves by making unhealthy choices. Overindulgence in eating is one of those ways (shopping, drinking, gambling and other celebratory rituals can also be dangerous to our health and to our lifestyle). A special occasion can easily turn into a guilt gala if we allow this food teaser to sway our better judgment.

### **How to handle it**

Small treats during a special occasion are OK. However, our nutritional goals should remain the same whether we are dining in or out, or whether we are at a party or a picnic. It is never your last opportunity to have a favorite food. You will have another chance for chocolate cake. Be creative, and find traditions other than food to acknowledge special occasions.

### **Sneaky Lie: It's a bargain!**

Some call it the "Costco effect." It happens when items you don't especially want or need suddenly become appealing when you can get twice as much for half the price. Why is it that the "healthy" food options at fast food restaurants cost more than their full-fat counterpart meals? A "combo" meal may be a bargain by gaining the large fries, but do you want all those "extras" on your hips?

### **How to handle it**

Go ahead and indulge if you must, but choose the small burger and drink. Adopt a "pay less, weigh less" attitude when tempting to buy in bulk. Sure, it may be a better value to buy ten cookies for \$5 than it is to buy one cookie for \$2, but when you choose the smaller package, you'll actually spend less and save hundreds in calories. This concept also works at restaurants. Try ordering an appetizer or "lunch portion" of your dish even if it costs the same as the full entrée price. You're not wasting money. If you smartly choose to eat only what you really require, your meal will cost the same either way. You are simply choosing to buy fewer calories with your money.

### **Sneaky Lie: It's no fun without food!**

For many of us, the best part about getting together with friends is thinking about what restaurant we are going to and what food we want to eat! It seems almost strange to not have food around when people gather together. It is a bonding experience we are socialized to accept, and even thrive on. For others, watching TV or going to the movies require munching rituals. Even boring meetings or social events seem instantly appealing when there are big bowls or platters of something around to chomp. Many times we just eat on autopilot whenever engaged in a certain activity. Where's the fun if there's no food?

### **How to handle it**

Make the fun happen when it is not mealtime. Break your pattern of association between food and activities. Change one thing about your routine where you tend to indulge purely out of habit. Get up and change rooms, change your focus or change the activity altogether. You can still enjoy your favorite TV show, or meeting with friends. Combine your plans with something new, like an outdoor activity or a new hobby. What else do you enjoy that won't sabotage your waistline (and your wallet)?

## **Sneaky Lie: I deserve it!**

Have you ever had one of *those* days? Everything went wrong and by golly you deserve a marvelous meal at the end of the day. You want it all: appetizer, dinner and dessert. The teaser logic is that this is one thing you have control over and you are certainly going to utilize it! Food is easy to obtain and provides comfort for stressful times, or so it seems at the moment. Food is nurturing and it feeds our hungry hearts, but its pleasure is only temporary. We must deal with the emotions that come with our daily lives and the consequences of overeating.

## **How to handle it**

Instead, think about all that you deserve that is not a detriment to your weight. What you deserve is to be healthy! You are valuable. Sometimes we need to stop, take a break and think of all the ways we can pamper ourselves with things other than food, like relationships and self-care. Make a list of ten things that support, encourage and uplift you, yet don't compromise your weight loss goals.

Take action today! Don't be tricked by food-pleaser teasers. Develop new thoughts that support your total health and wellness goals that are also free, satisfying and that celebrate you and your health!

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## **About Centerstone**

Centerstone, a not-for-profit organization, has provided a wide range of mental health and addiction services to people of all ages for more than 50 years. Through more than 60 facilities and 170 partnership locations across Middle Tennessee, Centerstone serves more than 50,000 children, adolescents, adults and seniors each year. Centerstone is accredited by The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). For more information about Centerstone, please call 888-291-4357 or visit [www.centerstone.org](http://www.centerstone.org).

## **About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS**

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.