

**TRANSFORMING EMOTIONAL EATING WITH  
COMPASSION, CURIOSITY,  
CUSTOMIZATION & COMMITMENT** | Dr. Deb Thompson  
Psychologist  
Integral Coach

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**OVERVIEW**

- + my story
- + the prevailing paradigm for "controlling" overeating
- + a new paradigm for changing overeating
- + focus on emotional eating
  - \* risk factors
  - \* first aid/coping
  - \* prevention
- + questions

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**MY STORY** |

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- Started dieting at age 15 (normal weight)
- Started going off diets and stress eating... and gained weight
- Overweight in 20's... obese in 30's

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- Overworking in private practice
- 3 kids
- Virtually no self care
- Weight: clamp downs, collapses, checking out

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- Tried to lose weight to look/be good
- Finally on behalf of wellness at age 39.5
- Lost 85 lbs in 20 months... in 2003/4
- Built a nourished life... doable, sustainable, generative

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IT CAN BE DONE...  
IF DONE DIFFERENTLY |

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14.5 YEARS AFTER I BEGAN |

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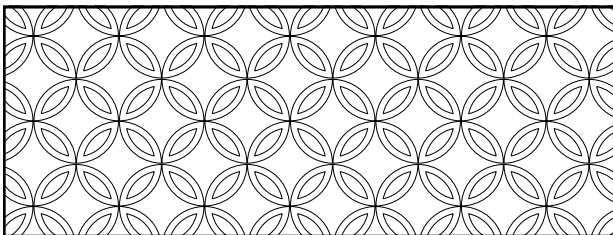
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FIRST: THE PREVAILING PARADIGM | And the four ways it effs  
up our weight wellness

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- FIRST: A little experiment...
- Finish these sentences, on paper or in your mind:
  - When I look at parts of my body I don't like, I feel \_\_\_\_\_
  - When I think about my eating habits, I feel that I am \_\_\_\_\_
  - If I were to pinch an inch or more right now, I end up thinking I am \_\_\_\_\_

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ONE: condemnation (shame) as a primary driver

- Bias against larger bodies
- Motivation to redeem oneself
- Presumes greedy and lazy
- "solution" is to smarten up

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- Back to the experiment...
- Imagine saying to your friend, sister, daughter:
  - When I look at parts of your body I don't like, I feel \_\_\_\_\_
  - When I think about your eating habits, I feel that you are \_\_\_\_\_
  - If I were to pinch an inch or more on you, I end up thinking you are \_\_\_\_\_

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- Bias runs deep, even in evolved, developed, compassionate women!
- We need to keep this enemy close... and keep turning away from shaming... because it is WRONG...
- And because it doesn't WORK: it leads to clamp downs, collapses and checking out

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TWO: clamp downs

- Diets and exercise regimes
- Will power
- Attempted or presumed to be mandatory (and not enacted)

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THREE: collapses

- Going off plans
- Abstinence violation effect
- Comfort eating (including about "failing" to lose weight)

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FOUR: checking out

- Giving up
- Ignoring body, weight and wellness

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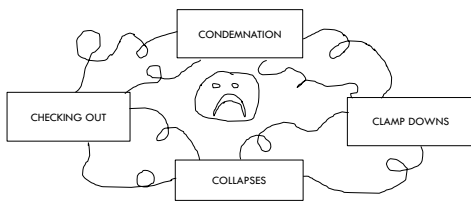
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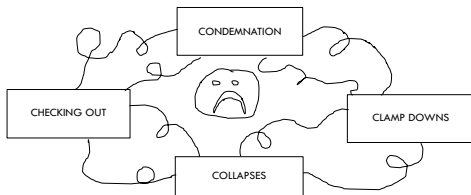
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WHICH BOX(ES) DO YOU EXPERIENCE?  
WHICH LOOP(S)?

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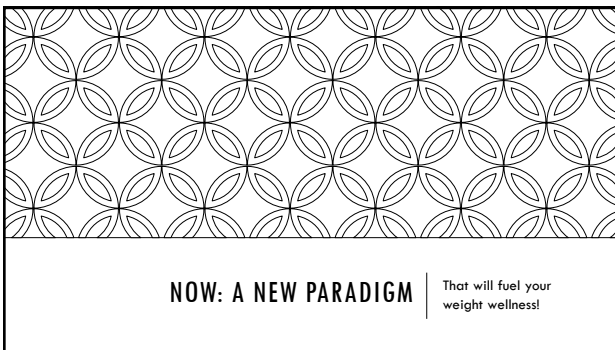
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ONE: compassion

- Being kind and fair and understanding
- As we tend to be with others!

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TWO: curiosity

- What is really going on?
- What function does the dysfunction serve?
- What contributes to challenges? To successes?
- What skills need developed?
- What is interdependent?

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THREE: customization

- Baby steps
- Taking into account personal yums and yucks and competing commitments
- Not just food and exercise, but also movement, rest, play and connection

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FOUR: commitment

- Connecting to a strong personal WHY
- Making a nourished life a priority
- Trying new habits and mindset shifts... seeing how they go...

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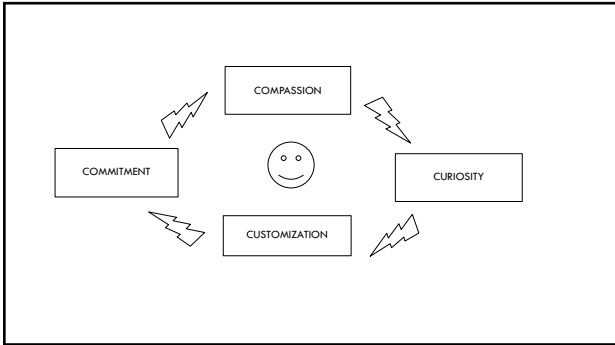
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**FOCUS ON EMOTIONAL EATING** | Powered by compassion, curiosity, customization and commitment!

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**Risk #1: Gender and helping professions**

*"(B)y choosing food as your drug—sugar highs, or the deep, soporific calm of carbs—you can still make the packed lunches, do the school run, look after the baby, stop in on your parents and then stay up all night with an ill 5-year-old—something that is not an option if you're regularly climbing into the cupboard under the stairs and knocking back quarts of scotch.*

*Overeating is the addiction of choice of "carers," ... It's a way of screwing yourself up while still remaining fully functional, because you have to. Fat people aren't indulging in the "luxury" of their addiction, making them useless, chaotic or a burden. Instead, they are slowly self-destructing in a way that doesn't inconvenience anyone. And that is why it's so often a woman's addiction of choice."*

Caitlin Moran

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Risk #2 Biology

- Hunger (shifts, disorganization, overwhelm)
- Fatigue (demanding work, long hours, shifts, poor sleep)
- Temperament, trauma exposure: link between # of hassles and snacking only in high cortisol responders to lab stressor

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Risk #3  
Psychology/Biology: restrictive eating

- All or nothing thinking
- Abstinence violation effect (Eff It)
- Hyper-palatable foods available

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SO WHAT CAN WE DO? | + compassion  
+ curiosity  
+ customization  
+ commitment

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**FIRST... FIRST AID**

- (then building a nourished life on behalf of prevention)
- Four N's for first aid when emotional eating is tempting... or underway... using COMPASSION, CURIOSITY, CUSTOMIZATION, and COMMITMENT
- Can also use the 4 steps after a slip up... to foster self awareness and new options next time

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**COMPASSION + CURIOSITY**

*(mindfulness — self-awareness without judgment)*

**NOTICE** urges to eat when:

- you are full or not hungry
- more in your mind than your stomach or body sensations
- more sudden than gradual
- more intense than mild to moderate
- cravings for specific foods more so than any number of nourishing foods you like

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**COMPASSION + CURIOSITY**

**NOTICE** urges to eat that are:

- not linked to hunger or fullness
- more in your mind than your stomach or body sensations
- more sudden than gradual
- more intense than mild to moderate
- cravings for specific foods more so than any number of nourishing foods you like

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CUSTOMIZATION & COMMITMENT

**NEED?**

- Feelings signal a NEED
- How can you meet that need in the moment?
- (later today we will look at the longer run)
  
- Eg. Loneliness
- Eg. Anger

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**NEED?**

- Not just about our emotional needs either... re FOOD... turning to food as a FRIEND is impacted by:
  
- getting too strict re what can and can't eat, and ignoring flavour (CLAMP DOWN) = feelings of overwhelm and stress...
  
- getting too hungry, or having hyperpalatable choices at the ready = hard not to COLLAPSE into poor choices and then suffer feelings of CONDEMNATION

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FOOD HABITS THAT SUPPORT LESS EMOTIONAL EATING

1. aim for healthy-ish in your fuel... with LOTS of flavour
2. keep hunger at bay... strategic snacking! Especially include some protein
3. keep trigger foods out of easy access
4. allow being off the hook from responsibilities without being "bad" with food as the "portal to badness"

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**PUT IT INTO PRACTICE** | See worksheet Working the Four N's for Now

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**PREVENTION: BUILDING A NOURISHED LIFE** | Reducing emotional eating by filling up our fuel tanks

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- The four N's of first aid are useful in warding off and diminishing the extent of emotional eating episodes
- And... by building more nourished lives, we more deeply fill ourselves up to PREVENT the emotional distress and depletion that underlies turning to food for comfort

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**MOVEMENT**

- + stress reduction
- + resilience
- + fun
- + wellness

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**REST**

- + sleep
- + non-doing
- + unplugging
- + boundaries

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**PLAY**

- + fun
- + flow
- + learning/mastery
- + boundaries

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**CONNECTION :**  
**TO SELF** | + meditation  
+ body scans  
+ journaling  
+ quiet time

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**CONNECTION:**  
**RELATIONSHIPS** | + boundaries  
+ positive  
+ kindred spirits  
+ vulnerability/courage

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**CONNECTION:**  
**MEANINGFULNESS** | + nature  
+ spirituality  
+ purpose

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- Building a nourished life takes:
  - Compassion: kindness and regard... babysteps... vulnerability
  - Curiosity: what's low? What will fill me? What will lessen depletion?
  - Customization: to each their own!
  - Commitment: putting self on the list of competing commitments... trying new things

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- Then loop back through to TWEAK for iterations 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.:
- Compassion
- Curiosity
- Customization
- Commitment

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**PUT IT INTO PRACTICE** | See worksheet *Filling Up Your Fuel Tanks*

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- Pick ONE fuel tank:
  - Movement, Rest, Play, Connection (self, relationships, meaningfulness)
- PICK ONE thing to say YES to or DO this week on behalf of that tank
- PICK ONE thing to say NO to or don't DO this week on behalf of that tank
- WHO will support you in this intention/endeavor? Social support is helpful!!!  
(www.yournourishedlifecommunity.com)
- Eg. Loneliness

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*Your Nourished Life*

**CONTACT** | + blogs  
 WWW.YOURNOURISHEDLIFE.COM | + Eff Overeating free  
 mini course  
 + one on one coaching

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