

# Food is the First Addiction

## How to use this card:

*Pass this card around. Each person please state your name and read a small section of the content on **Food is the First Addiction**:*

## Concept 3: Food is the First Addiction

*Suppers recognizes that food is our most expensive national addiction.*

In human and dollar calculations, the consequences of the processed, drug-like food supply already surpass the consequences of cigarettes and alcohol. Not only does processed food lead us down the path to obesity and diabetes, the havoc wrought on blood sugar and mood chemistry sets us up for dependence on and addiction to other substances. Experts disagree on which foods have what consequences, whether or not there are good foods and bad foods, or whether there are any nutritional advantages to organic or locally grown foods. Suppers recommends we not be part of their experiment. We know that eating food as it exists in nature is safe; for everything else we are lab rats.

## [Ingrid's Story: This Is Not About Willpower](#)

If the bariatric surgery office hadn't made me wait for several months, I would have had part of my body removed. I was that desperate. I know people who think the surgery is heaven sent, and I am happy for them. Personally I think having part of your body removed because you can't stop eating is nutty, but I was about to do it myself because I was entirely enslaved to food and saw no other way out. Desperation is not a strong enough word to describe my situation. I'm so grateful a nutritionist steered me down another route.

This is not about willpower. Whatever my compulsion is, it operates on a plane beyond the reach of human willpower. Many a time I would wake up to find a mess of wrappers or dirty dishes in the kitchen, with only the vaguest recollection of going down in the middle of the night in a virtual trance, prowling around in the fridge. There were more conscious behaviors too, like when I'd order fast food and make noises about buying for the whole family, when in fact it was all for me. I would go home and eat until I was numb and hate myself afterward. I even passed up social invitations I might have enjoyed, fearing my friends would see me at my worst if I couldn't control my eating at the buffet table.

I related these embarrassing experiences at a meeting with people I'd never met before. I was surprised to hear myself revealing humiliating secrets to total strangers. But as I spoke, I realized I had no telltale anxiety, no fidgeting; I was at ease. There is something about the culture of Suppers that makes it possible to walk into a meeting and start speaking my truth. "I never met you before, but I feel safe already." That sentence actually came out of my mouth – me, Ingrid, the closet everything.

So many things clicked for me. After years of spending fortunes on diet programs that made me feel ashamed, this free alternative was making me feel peaceful and confident. I was going to be doing my own experiments, not squishing myself into somebody else's protocol. My eating decisions would be about what I need, not what they are selling. I got it: what I needed was real food, not pre-packaged, nutritionally calculated, scientific food-like matter. Food.

In the first few meetings, it was plain that the missing link for me was accepting that the foods I binged on were the ones I was addicted to. I would have to do experiments to determine which treats I could enjoy in

moderation and which ones I'd have to avoid totally, at least for a while, because they were triggers for binge eating. And the antidote was not lectures, weigh-ins, or talking about my relationship with food. The antidote was cooking together, eating together, talking together, with the emphasis on "together." For me this is as much about the people as it is about the food. When I arrive at a meeting, without fail, the second I walk in the door I feel the warmth of family Thanksgiving.

I've been assured that as my body does its housekeeping, my mood and emotions will become brighter and brighter. In a few short weeks I feel the difference already. I leaned over to the woman next to me, "So am I feeling more emotionally at ease because the food is healing me or because I found a community of nonjudgmental friends?" "Who cares?" she said. "As long as it works."

Yeah, who cares. There's something very complete and satisfying about preparing a meal with a bunch of people and sitting down to eat it. Who cares if I'm responding to protein, carbohydrates, and fat or support, acceptance, and love. When somebody takes the time to buy my food, teach me how to prepare it, and light a candle for my evening meal, I start feeling fed long before the first spoonful of soup goes down.

**Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers concept of Food is the First Addiction.**

**With which foods do you know or suspect your body has a special relationship, and how do you experience the consequences of eating them?**

**Discussion Prompts (Each person select a prompt that works for you.)**

- How important is feeling safe when you're talking about what feels like an addiction?
- How will you know when your body is letting go of a food that triggers unwanted eating?
- If your eating is entirely clean, and you have no sense of "having a relationship" with any foods, describe how you benefit from participating at Suppers.

**Ideas for Next Steps:**

***Experiments and Observations:***

- Make a list of the foods and beverages with which you suspect you have an addictive relationship. Don't do anything else.
- When you're ready, test your theory. What will you need to do to prepare for giving up a favorite item for a week. If it's too soon to do it, just notice how you feel.
- Do a thought experiment: Imagine that you hear another person sharing their vulnerability and describing their relationship with food, just notice how it feels.

***Between Meetings:***

- Read how other Suppers members related to this concept.
  - Traditions run deep. If your way of eating puts you at odds with your loved ones, read [Norma Jeanne's Story](#), page 98 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Logical Miracles* or on the Suppers website.
  - For people whose relationship with food is driven by emotional eating, read [Bernadette's Quandary](#), page 100 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Logical Miracles* or on the Suppers website.