

A Special Dedication

By Yolanda Koumidou-Vlesmas, LCSW

The Mind

**Being a wild horse,
our soul gallops free across the vastness of the universe.
Yet our mind, will tether us to a poll.
Acknowledge it.
Praise it.
Respect it.
But then, learn to direct it.**

A poem by Yolanda Koumidou-Vlesmas

Dreams fuel our galloping soul. Food fuels our body. When we consciously or unconsciously abandon our dreams, the soul continues to need nourishment. At a certain point, the mind convinces us that food can now feed the soul. In creating this program, I am taking part in the untethering of dreams, inspirations and wishes of people that are weighted down by the mind's illusion. They spend their energy on either putting on or taking off weight while their inner critical voice gives rise to self-loathing and daily self-disappointment no matter whether they are gaining or losing. (Even when you are losing, there is an inner voice that continues to say, "You do not look good enough yet.") I know. I have been one of you for so many years. I also know what happens when a shift occurs that causes body image to take a new identity: *space opens up for inspiration, dormant dreams and wishes get resurrected creating new challenges for personal growth in one's inner and outer life.*

When the mind takes a break from focusing on food and when depression about body image dissipates, we have a chance to raise our eyes to gaze at the horizon spreading wide open in front of us. What prevents us from looking up is that we are not ready to confront what is waiting for us. How would life be when we stop thinking about food and diets? What would take its place? One of the main reasons for not assuming our natural weight is our lack of readiness: readiness for change in our life, readiness to welcome back forgotten dreams, readiness to act on ideas and life plans and readiness for absolute and complete self-responsibility, the kind that involves recognition of our vulnerability and willingness to handle it in new ways without misusing food. If we are not ready to move on, the extra weight is a guaranteed and successful way of keeping us on hold. Perhaps this is what we need or rather needed up until now, being on hold until we have become ready to tolerate living our lives with us in it.

Overeating has an obvious negative side: we take on weight that does not belong to us and we do not feel comfortable with it, to say the least! But what is not easily obvious to most people is how overeating has an important positive side as well. The parts of us who misuse food by overeating are actually helping us until we can help ourselves. There is a hidden and precious reward when we eat regardless whether our body wants it, likes or is hungry for it: food magically takes our mind and emotions away from overwhelming, unpleasant or hurtful events, conditions, and situations. It offers a respite during the duration of insatiable consumption. Our thinking stops and our emotions become numb. It never fails except the moment when we stop eating. That is when different parts of us come in and lynch us unmercifully.

Those of us who have developed this special relationship with food know about this process. Those who have not connected food to dealing with their feelings have a difficult time understanding why we cannot "just stop over eating!" These people, who I call "Them", perhaps already learned how to handle their vulnerability or maybe they have discovered other helpers like work, internet, exercise, infatuations, substances etc. to deal with their emotions.

This program is dedicated to those of us whose soul is ready to gallop in new horizons through breaking free from the powerful attachment to eating and developing a natural relationship to food.