



How do Food Addicts Abstain from Food?



Here at The Cabin we use the **3 Circle Model** to build your recovery plan and rid yourself of the emotional obsessions and damaging physical consequences of disordered and compulsive eating patterns. The **3 Circle Model** is a 12 Step technique shown to be highly effective in addressing behavioural addictions as it allows definition of abstinence and recovery where total abstinence is not possible. The Three Circles also allow us to clarify what will lead us to relapse, and what will lead us to recovery and freedom.

We believe that it is important, that food and the behaviours around it, are not made the single focus in recovery from eating disorders. Our experience tells us that abstinence from compulsive over-eating, starving, vomiting and purging is only your first step. Initially abstinence will relieve the physical consequences of compulsive disordered eating patterns, however recovery will only begin when we engage in working the 12 Step program facilitating the journey to long-term emotional, psychological and spiritual health.



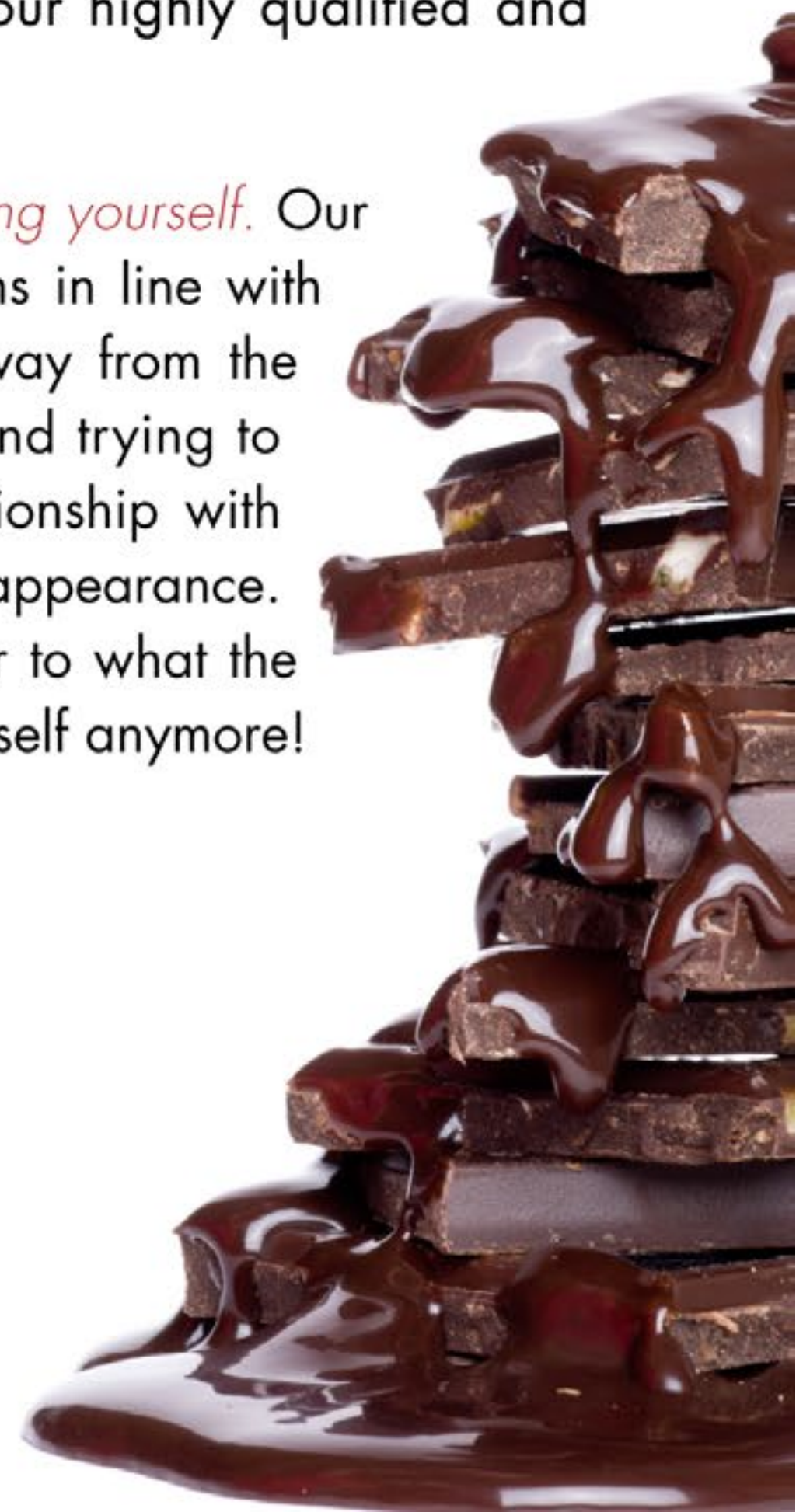
How to be physically abstinent from using food addictively

After years of compulsive disordered eating patterns [*food addiction*], most of us have no idea on how to physically abstain from using food addictively. We may have little or even no concept of how to fuel our bodies in a healthy and wholesome way.

The following basic guidelines will help you get a clearer understanding of your addiction and empower you to achieve abstinence and get on the path to recovery.

- *Upon arrival at The Cabin, cease consuming the specific trigger substances, namely refined carbohydrates [white flour and sugar].* Eating these refined substances has a direct effect on our brains maladapted pleasure reward system and causes an emotional lift and leads to further physical and emotional cravings. This is one of the reasons why eating one chocolate leads to eating the whole box or eating one Pringle results in devouring the whole packet. Abstinence from these substances dramatically reduces the symptoms of craving or bingeing.
- *Eat three regular meals each day with nothing in between.* The appetite centre of the brain becomes stimulated by chewing – and once stimulated remains activated for about thirty minutes. Eating in between meals can cause a sustained feeling of hunger or urge to eat – this mechanism underpins why it is still possible to feel hungry after a severe binge.
- *Use our menu card system each morning to choose your daily meals.* In the early days of abstinence partaking in our buffet-style meals is too “high risk” and will lead back to disordered eating. Using our menu card system supports you to put in place abstinence from unsafe refined carbohydrates and offers sensible portion control. Entrusting your food intake to The Cabin may fill you with fear – that you will have either too little or too much and have no control– however experience tells us that these fears are a symptom of distorted thoughts and addictive disease.

- *Share your thoughts and feelings.* If you experience any cravings to binge, purge or starve, we suggest that you share your feelings with someone at the time. As with the early stages of abstinence from drugs and alcohol, cravings are normal and not something to be ashamed about. Indeed talking about your cravings will reduce their intensity. During the first couple of weeks of your abstinence, you will journey through a withdrawal phase during which your brain chemistry will be normalizing. You may experience emotional and physical symptoms including cravings, heightened emotions or low mood. However within ten days of becoming abstinent, you will feel significantly better. Returning to active addiction by bingeing, purging, starving or eating refined carbohydrates during this "detox" will return your brain chemistry to its maladapted state requiring a further period of withdrawal and prolonging any withdrawal symptoms.
- *Avoid laxatives because they form part of the binge/purging behavioural addiction component of an eating disorder.*
- *Avoid using the toilet for at least one hour after every meal.* We suggest that you remain in the company of others during this time. Meal times are likely to be vulnerable and uncomfortable times and we suggest you share your feelings with others at these times.
- *Taking regular exercise is healthy-* but abstain from over- exercising, either to control body weight or to achieve the emotional highs excessive exercising can produce. Entrust your exercise program to our highly qualified and experience fitness staff.
- *During your stay at The Cabin abstain from weighing yourself.* Our medical staff will weigh you under blind conditions in line with basic medical care. Recovery is about getting away from the obsessive attempts to control your body weight and trying to control your feelings through your addictive relationship with food, exercise and through changing your physical appearance. You no longer have to hand over emotional power to what the scales say that day. There is no need to weigh yourself anymore!



- *Focus on the factors that cause relapse rather than the food.* Start the work that recovery requires, identify the triggers, the toxic feelings, the slippery behaviours and the distorted [stinking] thinking that activate your addictive behaviours. Develop recovery promoting behaviours. It is important that food and the behaviours around it are not made the central issue in your treatment. Abstinence from over-eating, starving, vomiting and purging is only your first Step. Complete your Step One mind maps, share then with your counsellor and peers then move on to the solution focused part of your treatment. Get on the program!
- *Do not carry around bottled water.* Water intake can suppress cravings to eat supporting anorexia.
- *The exact composition of a sensible diet, with a range of fats, carbohydrates and proteins is not of any great interest to people in recovery from eating disorders.*
- *Avoid all artificial sweeteners and appetite suppressants.*
- *Keep to a total of one glass of 100% fruit juice per day.*

