

*Purgers* (who induce vomiting and *bingers* (who overeat habitually) have to estimate the frequency of their behavior. Then the hard work begins.

The cornerstone of Strong's approach for both bingers and restricters is a book called Breaking Free: From Compulsive Eating, written in 1984 by Geneen Roth. Hunger is the forgotten factor in any dysfunctional eating, according to Roth. And she insists that getting in touch with the physical cues of hunger is the only way to break the cycle of compulsive overeating.

There are too many emotional reasons to binge on food: boredom, anger, depression, frustration. To counteract them, Strong reconnects patients with the physical signals of hunger through relaxation and meditation. In a relaxed state, Carol and her group embarked on "hunger journey," mentally traveling through the body noting physical signs of hunger. "We'd start with our mouth and work down our throat and esophagus and get to our stomach," Carol recalls.

From there, patients rate their hunger on a scale from one to ten, with five being satiated. More difficult to do, patients must evaluate their emotional hunger and learn how to meet the needs that drive their appetites--without the use of food.

Carol's problem started after she dropped out of college at 19, got married and promptly had three kids. With her sun-streaked hair, large blue eyes, and turned-up nose, she found the extra weight protected her from the unwanted advances of men. But not from the explosive temper of her husband Bill. Belittling her, throwing things, and occasionally hitting her became Bill's way of coping with the pressure of fending for his growing family.

It took the threat of a legal separation to get Bill to confront his demons, and he is