

now in counseling with Carol. But last fall, Carol was just beginning to recognize that she overate to fill a void in heart rather than her stomach. Food was "like a love relationship," Carol says, "you find comfort, security, entertainment, but . . . it's killing you." She finally realized, "what I really needed was to talk to my husband." Carol gradually stopped leaning on food for support, and she discovered how to eat without going overboard.

Shattering the notion of counting calories and exerting will power, Roth promotes learning to believe that our bodies know their ideal weight. And she recommends simply eating the foods we crave. License to pig out you say? No way. It's just logic. If you can eat freely tomorrow, Roth suggests, you don't need to gobble it all down today.

Bordering on dieting heresy, the idea is to identify and indulge if necessary (in a controlled way) in foods that trigger binges. "It sounds crazy but it works," Carol declares, "because you give yourself permission instead of constantly restricting and denying, which is still obsession with food." "It's entirely different than a binge," Carol says. But she cautions, "don't do it when you're all hyped up." Carol's learned to be analytical about her feelings and motives while eating foods that she used to deny herself.

There's more method than madness in Strong's program. "Deprivation of any kind makes you long for whatever you don't have," Barnett asserts. "Food is especially powerful because of the physiological involvement, it's not just a psychological thing," she says. Exploring the physical urges to eat is a vital part of the program for the eating disordered patient.

During "therapeutic lunches" three days a week at Strong, under the guidance of nutritionists, participants bring in food from home to eat in the presence of others. Desserts were Carol's stumbling block. "Here I am a fat person, what am I doing eating desserts,"