



Inside Relationships

by Jan Denise

Mirror Reflects Hunger Within

Two out of three Americans are overweight, making obesity the second leading cause of preventable death. Instead of eating less, we spend \$35 billion a year on weight loss products.

We're not stupid; we're in pain. We have an emptiness, a yearning, a hunger ... and we're doing our damndest to satisfy it with food. We can't.

So, what is this hunger, and how *can* we satisfy it?

We want to feel connected and secure, we want to have something to contribute and we want to be gaining ground. We want to know that we're worthwhile. And when we feel like we're coming up short, many of us resort to what we know will give us pleasure — another potato chip, ice cream or chocolate.

It's a temporary fix, though; and as is the case with any addiction, we begin to need more — only more is never enough.

In her new book, "The Hunger Within," Marilyn Ann Migliore, a nutritionist and psychotherapist at the University of Michigan, helps us address the root cause of unwanted eating behaviors. "We use food — this drug — in an insatiable quest to fill an emotional void," says Migliore.

Instead of eating more cookies, we can work toward filling the emotional void. And, no, it's not too late for you.

Let me introduce you to Keith Ahrens, who lost an amazing 200 pounds and became a certified fitness trainer. I recently met Ahrens, who's also the author of a new memoir, "Outrunning My Shadow," and felt the sincerity of his goal to help others.

When Ahrens faced open-heart surgery to save his life, he gained respect for his body. He started eating in an entirely new way and made a commitment to exercise.

Migliore believes — as do I — there's more to his story than he was initially aware of; and in retrospect, it's easy to connect the dots.

When Ahrens began to demonstrate a new level of respect for his body by changing his eating and exercise habits, he also began to align his behavior with his values. He was on the path to self-esteem and feeling good about himself! And as he shed the pounds and got more physically fit, the way he thought about himself continued to change.

Thoughts trigger feelings, which inspire actions, which yield results. It's a cycle. Positive thoughts lead to positive results, which lead to still more positive thoughts.

In changing the way Ahrens saw himself, he also changed the way others saw him. How would your relationships and your life change if you were to lose weight? How would they change if you recognized

the hunger within and took legitimate steps to fill it?

"I can help people focus on the positive, the guilt-free you-can-do-it attitude that so many of us need when faced with drastic change," says Ahrens. "The essence of my message is simple: get a checkup, move more today than you did yesterday, make a difference in your own well-being, and take control."

When you do that, you begin to care for yourself. You begin to love yourself well. And that is the key to filling the hunger within to which Migliore directs our attention.

Don't wait until it's a matter of life or death to realize that you're eating to satisfy more than a physical hunger. Look now at why you are eating and how eating too much is affecting your health — physically, mentally, emotionally and even spiritually. Take steps, however small, to show yourself the respect you deserve. You'll immediately be empowered to take another step and another step. They don't have to be big steps. Just *take them* one at a time.

You'll find yourself moving away from the pain with a healthier and happier heart ... and the knowledge that you are indeed worthwhile.

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