
Morgan Spurlock Explains the Increase in Food Sizes in Relation to Obesity

The film *Supersize Me* does a good job laying out the case for the corporate blame for the rise in obesity in the United States. In the film, an expert points out the fact that food portions have gotten larger than in the past. She explains that that one would be hard-pressed to find a piece of meat that is only three ounces, the recommended serving size. Morgan Spurlock goes on to explain that portions have gotten larger to maximize profits so that people can feel both satisfied and as though they have gotten their money's worth. There is definitely some truth to this. Being that this author had worked in the fast food industry for over four years, it can be said that a very frequent complaint from regular customers was that their sandwiches were not filling. Customers would often complain that their fry boxes were not full to capacity as well. This thrifty approach to eating has probably led to the popularity of calorie-dense foods in a society in which people have to eat both quickly and efficiently anyway.

This parsimonious approach to eating resembles the habits that are often instilled in us in childhood, especially nowadays. One of the most common phrases heard in either a restaurant setting or a home at mealtime is "finish your food." Children are trained from a young age that gluttony is preferable to wastefulness. It could certainly be argued that this is a major character flaw that conditions people to eat in spite of a lack of hunger simply because they paid money for the meal. In fact, the point has been made that that gluttony has ceased to be a sin, in spite of the fact that it is classified as one of the seven deadly sins (Critser 516).

It is an unfortunate reality that food commercials can be so successful. Sitting down to watch a program, it is possible during a commercial break to become hungry simply because one sees something delectable on the screen. Awareness of new products piques curiosity, which is a source of rationalization, meaning "well, I'll only have one, what's the harm?" While the whole of the culpability does not fall on the corporations for supporting and promoting their own products, this process is certainly the unwitting cause of many reckless decisions that stem from failures of personal conviction and responsibility.

In the film *Supersize Me*, one figure argues that we have yet to stigmatize overeating in the same way that we have stigmatized smoking because it is still considered rude to confront someone publicly for being obese, whereas harassing smokers has become socially acceptable. While confronting the overweight is considered rude, overeating has actually become a silent stigma. In the form of bickering and disguised prejudice, the obese are often presumptuously viewed as inferior. Overweight children are persecuted openly by their peers, and after years of their being told by teachers to cut it out, they become crafty to the point that it can go virtually undetected. The psychological toll of this stigmatization often causes the individual to seek comfort in food, the very thing that causes the problem in the first place.

As is consistent with human nature, people have to want change in order for change to be made. People will only stop taking part in behaviors that are dangerous to themselves and even others if they become convinced that ceasing these behaviors will improve their lives. Many men would prefer a brief and stigmatized life with unrestrained eating habits to a long and healthy life without the joys of food. The transformation can be difficult and tumultuous. This

author, citing his own experience, can say that weight loss is not easy, and even incredible success can be followed by gradual failure. Adopting a healthier lifestyle after a period of unrestrained diet can be likened to remaining sober after developing alcoholism, or abandoning the habit of smoking tobacco. The motivation must remain in order to ensure that a relapse, a very common result, does not occur.

In fact, while we stigmatize obesity in our society, we have also stigmatized diet and exercise. This author, citing his own experience, can recall many embarrassing moments of going to a gym and encountering the genuinely rude behavior of other members, mostly due to their feelings of superiority. In other words, while we condemn these people for their position, we also burden them with a lack of support when they try to make improvements. Stereotypes of the obese as weak in moral fiber condemn them to adopt the belief for themselves that they are unable to make a change.

The argument that gluttony is a moral issue is flimsy. While it could be argued successfully that it is unfair that our population is obese while many world populations starve, that is really the only main tenet. We should also avoid turning it into a political issue in terms of individual conduct. However tempting, no government or society should ever be able to regulate individual health. It may be true – and probably is – that people can live biologically happier lives by improving their physical fitness, but if we legislate this, we step on the toes of our forefathers and take away the freedom of laziness, however abused it could be viewed to be.

The best that we can do is attempt to educate children not to eat calorie-dense foods, and to live with the habits that we expect them to carry through life. For instance, to produce a son that is an athlete, it would make sense to get him involved in sports from youth. This does not include adding ESPN to your cable subscription. Parents impart their beliefs and practices onto their children from the moment of their birth. The next generation of Americans will only be active and healthy if we ourselves make the change to be a society that emphasizes activity and health.