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Who are you, really? In my practice within the Weight Loss Center, I've met some dynamic, engaging women that are living in a battle with their bodies. They make efforts to explain their reasoning for needing weight loss surgery. Their descriptions are adequate, but there is this frustrated tension beneath what they are expressing. Finally, exasperated, some will try to put words on it with- "This just isn't me!"

Do you have a vision of who you really are? Most patients I've spoken with would answer, "No", to that question. And yet, at the same time, they're able to say that the person that's sitting across from me, in my office, isn't them. Then who is this person sitting across from me? Who is the real you?

Drawing upon the tenets of spiritual and psychological discourses, it seems that there are two people living in all of us. There's the ego and the spirit. The ego has been described in many different ways, but I'd say that where words fail, the true meaning enters. It's that feeling of "this isn't me". It's that person that joins in when everyone is complaining about their spouses, while another part of you feels a little guilty not mentioning the rose he picked for you and left on the counter. We've been conditioned to look at the world a certain way and we're considered a little threatening if we don't join the status quo. For women, our sense of security and self-worth is realized through our relationships. One of the ways in which we bond with other women is by showing them that we're on the same level, that we can relate. When other women are complaining about their financial troubles, we don't choose that moment to express our glee over the raise we believe is coming to us. The part of us that knows what to say, rather than expressing what we want to say, is the ego.

We are also conditioned in what to do. We all know there are things that we automatically do, not because they make any sense, but because they've always been done that way. Often, these are things picked up in childhood. They stay there, buried in our subconscious mind, until something in our lives forces us to really look at them. Usually, this something is someone else who has different automatic behaviors that don't match our own.

As we are dependent upon our parents for eating, before we are able to think, it makes sense that our eating habits would be at the core of these learned behaviors. We learn that eating is a way of bonding, that eating something sweet will make us feel better, that we should feel guilty for not clearing our plates, that not asking for seconds is an insult to the one that cooked for us, etc.

We also take in eating mores into our subconscious through the culture in which we grow up, or live, in. In American society, we're taught to believe that getting a good value equals being smart. Super-size meals at McDonald's feed into this belief perfectly. For only a few cents more, you get so much more food. What kind of idiot wouldn't recognize and take advantage of this great deal? If we're really smart, we memorize what the recommended daily intake of fat and sodium are and realize that if we indulge in that much food at this meal, we're unable to eat much of anything for the rest of the day. <licking fries packet example- Fast Food Nation> . My best friend growing up worked at a McDonald's for a short period of time before it was kindly suggested that this might not be the appropriate career for her. She just couldn't stand the idea of Super-Size.

Anytime someone would order it, she would look at them as though they were contemplating dumping garbage in a beautiful lake and beg them to reconsider. “Do you really need that much food?” She’d implore. Obviously, McDonald’s did not want to encourage their employees to insist on customer’s self-reflection. But, maybe it is time to self-reflect. Maybe we should think about unhealthy food that forces our body to go through a lot of digesting as putting trash in a beautiful lake. But that requires self-reflection, which brings us back to who is this self?

On a mass scale, our culture tends to believe that one shouldn’t waste food. We’re so well-trained to clear our plates, that we rarely look at the amount before we start eating it. We’re usually focused on something else as we mindlessly eat until the plate is empty, rather than noticing when we are full. We have no idea what the food has been prepared with, rather going solely by taste. Who are we giving our power to? Why should the restaurant have more power than ourselves? Doesn’t it make sense that our own body is worth so much more than some restaurant owner we’ve never met? Why do we not insist on others’ treating us according to that worth? As my own diet has become refined over the years, I ask a lot of questions and make a lot of requests when I go to a restaurant. I’ve certainly been notified that I’m picky and difficult. But, why should I be easy going when it comes to taking care of my body? If my body isn’t healthy, I can’t live life the way I’m meant to. If your baby was crying and someone handed you a bottle with some substance in it, would you feel you had to take it and feed it to the baby? No. You’d probably ask some questions about it. You’d want to make sure that it was safe for your baby and wasn’t going to cause it harm. Yet, when it comes to taking care of our own bodies, we don’t ask questions or make requests. We just take what’s handed to us in the spirit of being likeable. If someone brings muffins to the office and everyone’s eating them, we eat one too. We usually don’t even think about it, because our social conditioning overrides any possible self-reflection. You wouldn’t do that for your baby, would you? You could probably imagine saying, “I appreciate the offer, but he only takes breast milk and was recently fed. He’s not due for another feeding until 12pm”. Can you say to the officemate “I appreciate the offer but I don’t eat muffins and I’m usually not hungry until 12”?

The answers may not be there yet, and that is ok. It’s enough to take the time to ponder this question “Who are You?” as you make choices throughout your day.