

[January 18, 1990 3:30 p.m. I asked Tom to talk with me specifically about weight reduction. This was the last segment he did. And then it was time to take him to the airport for the return trip home]

Sidney Well, first of all, I have an eating disorder. It's been diagnosed as that and I know that I do have. And I've turned so much attention toward food instead of seeking fulfillment and gratification other ways. And it is so hard to stick to a diet--it's hard for anybody--it's almost like I would eat if I knew it was going to kill me in the next five minutes. Maybe that's just my strong will that says "I will!" Or the little girl in me saying, "I will have it!" Could that sort of thing be healed?

Tom Yes, certainly. First of all your image of diets--forget them all. I'm just being honest; forget them all. They ain't going to work. If you use the word diet to mean whatever food you take in, the quantity, the frequency, yes, that's the real word diet. Lately, the word diet means less food, calorie counting, structured. Never mind all of those things. I'm being straight honest for you and for me. That is not going to work.

I'm about to go on a 1250 calorie diet. I'm going to as of the hospital visit. I haven't denied myself anything that is my preferable food. The toast, the breakfast foods are about my favorite kind of food. Bland foods. I haven't denied myself of anything. Now there's that payoff between nutrition and personal preference. For instance, my sugar intake. That's something that I may have to diet. I may have to say something like, let me see if I enjoy this coffee with a quarter of a teaspoon instead of a heaping one. That's structure and that's diet.

Again, to summarize, as opposed to thinking of a diet. What you have to do is not diet. That's like stopping or denying something. The approach that I can't do this, I can't have that. And the reverse is I have to eliminate foods. It's taking away, it's negative. What you have to do is sort out in your person--don't say your mind--your person that an attitudinal change, that this is what I want. Now I'm

not saying this Sidney in that photograph, the Sidney of 50 pounds ago, is what I want.

With all of the knowledge that you have about food, calorie counting, diets, and stuff like that, the "this is what I want" is a positive image, a shadow at first of the way you want to be. And associate that with, these are the kinds of foods that I want to eat to achieve that. And then get them all. This is what I want. This piece of wheat bread is what I want. I don't want this white bread. Keep it simple. Keep it focused on this is what I want. This is the fruit I want. It's like a reaffirmation of the power of positive thinking.

You already know that. But mechanically do this. You may wish to say it out loud. This is what I want. To eat in certain time frames. This morning I want to eat 250 calories--but don't concentrate on the calories. Concentrate on this is what I want. Then do it. And again, the time frame. It may be for you to have a little bit later dinner because "this is what I want." That will eliminate some of the hunger pains for the late night snack.

Hand in hand with doing that, is that when a slight little anxiety attack, a slight little nervousness, a little loneliness, that substitution where this is not what you want. But it doesn't work to say, "See that food over there?" And then look at the picture on the wall and then say, "This is what I want." That isn't going to work. As soon as you realize that you are approaching food, or thinking of food, you've got to focus on something that's tangible and do-able. And do it.

See what you're saying is, for this instant, right here now, this is what I want. I want this now. And I'm going to do this right now. Forget about the long range effect. Forget about a year ago. Forget about what you are right now. So who and whatever you are right now, "This is what I want." You may have to do games. Have some standby things that the next time you get hungry, and if it's not breakfast, lunch, or dinner, three squares a day, roughly 250 calories for breakfast, for lunch--and you can manipulate either way. If you can be satisfied with an apple for lunch, at 90-100 calories, if you can be satisfied until dinner, then you can have the potato with the steak, and add up to a total of 1250 calories a day.

Don't count the numbers. We are adults. You can guesstimate. But

the difference between another slice of bread or that slightly larger bowl of cereal. I'll tell you what, cereal is a good thing to have. The last time I measured out one cup Cheerios and I threw them into a bowl, and I was devastated! It hurt my feelings! And therefore it didn't work because I ended up having two. Have on standby that the next time, just before you go to bed, you'll have a little bowl of cereal. By the way, a bowl of cereal, if it's a small one, is a good thing to have before bedtime.

[End of Side A. Beginning of Side B]

You are dealing with a habitual pattern at this point in time. You're dealing with chemical dependency, and I'm saying that word dependency because your body is now adjusted to so many calories minimal before that acid starts coming up into your throat like it does when you're hungry, and that makes you feel bad. You're dealing with positive imagery. You feel neglected and lonely (see, I know you!), some of that is based on childhood experiences. Your minimum requirement for affluence that you're better off than your mother, or you are better off than the worse time of your childhood, is to have 55 cans of food, which you will never use, but that's your security blanket.

Sidney (Exclaiming in surprise) How did you know that!

Tom Shhhhh! Now that's okay. Maintain that, because see you either have to substitute comfortably for that which is security blankets, and strokes. "I have a desire and need to have a large amount of stuff in front of me." Now a large amount of salad is a large amount of stuff. And it works. But a salad is not a large amount of stuff. You eat it and 10 minutes later you're hungry. Well, there lies one immediate problem, where you have to say, well, "this is what I want." Now you may have to play a head game. Say it out loud, "This is what I want." Okay. But then you have to practice.

You feel like you want a large amount of food. Okay, eat celery, lettuce, and so on. And then when it comes to those salads, like so

many people who are food conscious, the salad is meaningless if you throw on more than one tablespoon of salad dressing. But you say that won't even cover all the leaves. Well then, smear them around a little more and make it work for you. And as you are doing this, even if you feel silly or stupid, say, this is what I want. You are retraining your brain!

Systems like Deal A Meal--have you heard of that? Richard Simmons has a Deal A Meal. You have cards in all of the different food groups, and they have the calories counted so you don't have to fool with all of that. You can prearrange a full day's food intake.

But then the problem with that is, when you do use up too much too soon, like at breakfast and lunch, you are committed to denying yourself in the later part of the day or in the evening. And that hurts; and that's the problem with that. But to get an idea if you've never calorie counted, and you don't know the types of food and the food sources, you can use something like that for--three days. After that, come on, get rid of the cards!

Get in the reaffirmation and power of positive thinking about this large amount of salad that, "this is what I want." Of course you've got to convince yourself that this is what I want for this moment. The worst part of that is you can't help but think in terms of back in time or forwards in time, but this is one circumstance where I'm saying forget about the larger scheme of things.

Love yourself in spite of your fallibility!

Sidney Why is that so hard for us to do?

Tom Well, we do have some real good excuses! And it's not a excuse, it's the myriad of excuses. You have been culturally conditioned that if you do a bad thing, you should get punished. And you probably will get punished. If you experience enough punishment it erases the bad thing. The problem is it's a lie. You can't erase history. And punishment does not vindicate your history. Love, honest forgiveness, and common sense--see you try to make up history, you erase it by making it up. I did a bad thing. I stole ten dollars, I'll make it up by paying back twenty dollars. And that will not only be reimbursement,

justification, but it will be enough punishment for me to-- No, it doesn't work. It's a lie.

Sidney I understand what you're saying. When I was a child, my mother wouldn't let me read anything except the Bible. So I would slip around and read as much as I could and then before I went to bed I'd read one or two chapters in the Bible. And I read the whole Bible three times, cover to cover.

Tom And you were doing that, and it even patted you on the back, but it was all a big lie. You were not being honest in all of the different things. You were trying to please your mother, and she never experienced it, she was never pleased, because it was a secret and a lie. With your cultural conditioning, you were appeasing it, trying to vindicate it, and you doubled the effort, and it's a lie. It won't work.

And yet you were disallowed, by cultural conditioning, to say, "I know that this is right for me. It is not right for my mother, obviously, but this is right for me. I need, or I want to, or I'm going to, read. You see then what the problem is? Your mother says it's a sin to read anything but the Bible, and there's the cycle again. And then, if you become rebellious, you will have to say, "Mom, I'm sorry, but you are wrong, and never mind you're wrong, that's okay for you, but I'm going to read!"

But back to the simplistic part of it-- living a lie. What we do is we try to over compensate and then substitution. We usually think in terms of substitution as, "Well, I feel bad right now. If I substitute this thing I'll feel better." So you turn to food as your pat on the back, you compliment, your hug, it fills in the missing gaps, and it makes you physically feel full and well, instantly. But ten minutes afterwards you feel guilty and bad because you are bloated.

It's so easy justifying a glass of milk, or an extra slice of bread, when our stomach growls and we feel dissatisfied. And do not say no, I shouldn't, or can't, or don't, to a glass of milk, because those words are negative. I can't, I don't, I shouldn't. And I'm saying also: do not say, I either need or I don't need a glass of milk. For me to say, I don't need a glass of milk, is negative, it's a cop out. It's not a lie, but at

least it has a negative connotation. So instead of me logically deducing and convincing myself, I'm thinking of a small glass of milk right now; I don't need it." See? That's a negative connotation. I'm saying I need to talk to you right now, I need to continue talking. What is my priority right now, what do I need? What do I really want, and therefore I need. I need to sit here comfortably and continue talking. And that eliminates the need for either the negative, righteous, convincing, don't do this thing. It's eliminating having to deal with the don't, can't, shouldn't, won't.

The point is the negative approach is too rough. The power of positive thinking is the joy of living, the joy of loving. I am lovingly saying, you need to do this right now. As far as a tactic, all right. You can have little games to plan.

You know that calorically you've had a sufficient dinner two hours ago, and it's now eight o'clock at night and you're kind of famished. The minute you realize, either walking toward the kitchen or you're thinking about a slice of bread now and I'll make it up at breakfast tomorrow.

As soon as you start thinking about that which you don't need, sharpen all the pencils! Or you do a positive thing, and even though it's a game, you might even say it out loud, I need to sharpen the pencils. A positive affirmation. But have it be something that is not a waste of time. Something that, if you do this silly little thing, there'll be some kind of a benefit. I need to wash one window. Now don't say, I'm thinking about that little glass of milk, so I've got to go wash a window! No, that would be a waste of time, too much work, etc.

But then seriously say, I'm in this situation right now, and I need to sharpen these pencils. And of course there are all other kinds of systems. You can get overwhelmed, the fake milkshake, the this and that. All are denials. And yet to calorically diet, that's a long, drawn out process. When you start talking about seven to ten or more pounds, anywhere in that range in poundage, it's got nothing to do with the poundage, it's got to do with your habitual patterns, your lifestyle in general, and why are you using food as some sort of a psychological crutch?

Well, what I want to say without going into any detail at all, our

conversations of this week, this short time, has delved into, solved several, made you wake up and look at, some or all of those things. I don't want to say a lot now, because you can overdo that, you can start rehashing over and you'll destroy that which was comfortably accomplished, accomplished for the first time in your life, some of the things, some of the thought patterns. Even if it was, someday I have to ventilate this to somebody, it turned out to be me.

My opinions. My educated awareness, "I know this about that and I want to share it with you." This is an invitation for a turning point. But if you approach it as this is an invitation for a turning point and you fail three days from now--ah, it didn't work! No. Sometimes you are hungrier than other times. And you have need to be hungrier at other times, cyclically as well as perhaps you did a lot of shopping that day.

Well, now, you've burnt several calories, and I know you'd be thinking, gee, I know I burned several calories today, and I don't want to waste the outgo. No, you have to satisfy the bodily needs on an hourly basis, as well as cyclically on a daily basis, or a weekly basis, a long-term basis. Over a long term if you deny your body a certain vitamins or something, you'll have an effect. But the body functions in hourly, not much more than daily cycles.

With the exception of the long-term diet deficiency; if over a long period of time you had no vitamin A, certain functions of your body--lymphic nodes, pituitary glands, you'll get more bloodshot eyes, things like that. That can be a diet deficiency by way of one vitamin. You don't have that problem. Anybody who lives in the United States does not have that problem. A glass of water, a glass of milk, and a slice of bread. That's it. You've got everything in there.

Forget salt. It is in enough stuff that you don't need it. Then of course, intelligent food choices. Another little pattern. You are going to be a little hungrier as you cut down on food intake. All the little things combined. Get those little tempting things out of sight, even at the expense of throwing them out. Most of your affirmative actions, your power of positive thinking, gets you over little temptations. Do you know that most food satisfactions--the little piece of candy--lasts you approximately three minutes. Not much more than three minutes

later, you will possibly have the same desire, the same need.

The crutches that I know you have used--you don't need crutches so much any more. I'm telling you, whether you want to hear it or not. The various forms of the crutches--you are going to feel stupid even having them. Habitually you'll have them and you'll use them, and that goes into weight problems.

Sidney I'm not sure I know what my crutches are. I guess right now I couldn't name them, but I'm sure I have them.

Tom I'll say this, and see I'm not supposed to be saying things like this, because you're not supposed to be hearing things like this, and you're not supposed to be thinking either the words or what I'm saying. Here's the analogy. I am missing numbers of hugs; I don't have a personal and private relationship with a guy or a woman or--therefore I'm lonely. It ends right there. Loneliness in your brain gives off chemical reactions.

The chemical reaction turns your stomach. Well, it doesn't turn; you know how you milk a cow? that's how your stomach goes. The phrase "turning your stomach." It forms new and more acid--and there's nothing in there. But it makes your stomach go as if there's something in there. Your brain is telling you that the satisfaction that you're formulating, Pavlov's dogs, conditioned reflexes. Your brain tells your stomach to start acting before you even get the food.

There's the acidic stomach. Gee, I can't stand this diet, my stomach is filled with acid. I've got to eat something to stop this acid. Probably never realizing that one thing led to another. See for you logically to deduce this, that's good the intellectual stuff. If you can understand, "Well, my hunger comes when I was lonely. Oh, loneliness equals hunger!" No, it's those many steps in between. And if you can block or stop any of those steps you're okay. But come on, let's get realistic. You've got to go back to that first stage and you've got to eliminate that first stage.

Oh, okay, now I understand. I've got to stop being as lonely as I have. See how easy it is to say? And then, oh, I'd better open the door and holler to the first man to come in and make me not lonely any

more. Then you can turn to some form of substitution. Well, Taylor is not a perfect substitute for a ham sandwich. Taylor is not a substitute for a personal, adult relationship, where you can get stroked, loved, physically fondled and pampered and hugged. Somebody alive to look at. Taylor can substitute, you look at something alive which you can speak out to and nurture, your feeling for nurture, your mother instincts. You can focus on that.

But come on! Get realistic, that's only a partial substitute, plus Taylor is a member of the family, he is yours, and it should be that. But that does not satisfy the need for the crutch, or the loneliness. Now you can't suddenly come up every three minutes with a forty- or fifty-year-old Englishman who is rich enough--

All right, you can't do that every three minutes. But you can make yourself feel good about yourself. You can just say, "I'm having an indication that I'm experiencing some loneliness. What can I think of, what can I do, how can I love myself. One of the ways is go and stand in front of the mirror! Now there's a dual problem there.

When you look in the mirror you start with, I can't, shouldn't, won't. You look in there and think, I shouldn't look like this. I shouldn't. I'm ashamed. I can't, I won't. Wow! I'm standing in front of a mirror, because I don't have the ability to spontaneously stop the loneliness, stop the biochemical reaction to getting hungry and therefore turning to food. It's another don't. It's another shouldn't.

So if you stand in front of a mirror and you can't laugh at the silliness of this thing, this whole bullshit bit, that you're doing something as stupid as stopping your work, getting up and looking in the mirror right there. Do you have any idea how stupid that is? Remember that this is Tom Sawyer's word, stupid, meaning silly, or ironic, or so involved in something that's so simple, or being so simple at something that's so involved. So if you can do it that way, again, a minor little thing.

If you're not hearing already, there is no one thing. There's no Deal A Meal, there's no mixup milkshake--which is just caloric denial. You're going to have to use various things and eliminate various other things. But what I want try and tell you (and this isn't just Tom Sawyer's power of positive thinking), is leave with a smile. Start with

a joke and leave with a smile. Not that.

But with what we have discovered, and what you're involved in right now, I don't mean just this stuff, the typing and stuff, but what you are involved with in your self-realization, of yourself, your true and honest and loving deserving self...

Well, dammit! We've shared a lot. You've thought a lot. And you've eliminated a lot of the shouldn't, can't, and don't and won't. When I leave here tonight, and you get up tomorrow, it's not going to be the same as last Monday. And it sure as hell ain't going to be the same as four Mondays ago. Because four Mondays ago, it was just another workday. Never mind your head's just a spinning, I'm not saying that, but it ain't going to be the same.

Sidney And that's okay. I feel okay about that. I mean I want it to be that way.

Tom Do you realize I'm sitting here, 60 pounds overweight, giving you some little bit of help on obesity. Or habitual psychological patterns. And again, see the phrase "to be broken" has a negative connotation. You're breaking, you're destroying, you're putting down. You're negative--you're can't, shouldn't, won't.

A positive affirmation is you're focusing on a new (new as in rearranging new, or enhancing old ways, that's positive). You've already gone through focusing on the long-term benefits of a weight loss will relieve a lot of pressure on your ankles, a weight loss will alleviate Tom Sawyer's degree of arthritis, a weight loss will feel good, a weight loss will--you've already done that! It doesn't work that well.

I know a lot of people would not want to hear what I'm saying to you right now, or to anybody. No, you should have long-term goals and stick to them. See, that's the denial. It turns into that too quickly.

Sidney Did I tell you what the doctor said to me the other day people who go on diets? He said that he didn't want to make me feel any worse than I already do, but a recent study showed that only one percent of people who lose weight still have kept it off at the end of