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## **World Crises Linked to Obesity**

Overeating has to do with world crises

Most of us have instant replays in our mind and hearts when we hear words like “9/11”, tsunami, Katrina, Iraq, earthquakes, fires and floods. When our ears hear the words and our eyes view the pictures, our whole being reacts. Emotions instantly surface and we may flood with an array of feelings. We may feel frightened for others as well as for ourselves -- unsafe, helpless, furious, overwhelmed, or sad, to name just a few possible reactions. We may feel relieved that we have survived and at the same time feel guilty that we have survived while others have not. We may become depressed and anxious and not understand why.

As human beings we act and react. Part of us may try to actively suppress or deny our uncomfortable feelings while another part of us may be reacting to the news by grieving or feeling angry. There is no one right way to react or to feel. When we are experiencing intense emotions, some that we understand and some that we may not understand, the end result is that we are in distress. Hearing of and witnessing the suffering of others causes stress and we may turn to unhealthy, old patterns in search of relief. We may seek food for comfort. Millions of us do!

This is a natural reaction. We learn at a tender age that sugars and carbohydrates will take away our pain. These substances mask themselves as our friends. They urge us to take care of our uncomfortable feelings by stuffing our bellies with creamy pastas, pastries and chocolate. The hard part is that they deliver what they promise. These foods help us in the short term to stuff our feelings deep inside where we don't have to deal with them.

When the effects of our “anesthetics” wear off, our physical bodies scream for MORE and our emotional selves (which haven't yet recognized and experienced our emotions) join the chorus and demand more “treats” to continue keeping feelings at bay. Some of us may seek alcohol, sex, gambling or drugs to avoid the complex emotions of everyday life. Many are more likely to prowl the bakery aisle at the grocery store.

Feelings exist for a reason. Each is telling us something. Each is bringing valuable information about what's going on around and within us. We need to listen, experience our feelings and let ourselves feel every high and low that life brings. Being alive does not mean experiencing only pleasant emotions. In fact, we need the difficult ones to appreciate the joyous ones.

If we do choose (and it is a choice, though it may not feel like one at the time) to soothe ourselves with food, we must never beat ourselves up when we are done. That NEVER helps! None of us can behave perfectly every minute. We are all human and we all make less than self-loving choices at times. We must not punish ourselves. We can remind ourselves that there are no mistakes, only lessons.

Be as gentle as possible with yourself first. Then do what you realistically can to help others. Listen to them. Pray with them. Share hugs, warm smiles, resources and words of encouragement. These are the greatest gifts. And remind yourself that life flies by. It is a blink of time. Amidst the stress and turmoil, tap into the peace and quiet strength within yourself. Bypass unhealthy choices as often as you can and don't beat yourself if occasionally you can't. Most importantly, appreciate each moment of this exciting, emotional, and sometimes turbulent journey!