

## What's Your Excuse .....

### For Not Eating Healthily?

Set aside your excuses and improve your relationship with food



JOANNE HENSON

Hands up: Joanne Henson's book about eating excuses

# Don't beat yourself up over food!

Last year health coach Joanne Henson dismissed our excuses for not exercising. This time the focus is on healthy eating. She talks to **Lynette Pinchess** about kicking those bad habits

**H**OW'S the New Year's resolution to eat more healthily going? Perhaps you started off with good intentions, swapping lunchtime crisps for a yoghurt or that afternoon chocolate for an apple.

But two months on, has that resolve weakened and you've succumbed to temptation be-

cause you're bored, fed-up or needed a treat?

We all know we should eat less sugar and fat and more fruit and vegetables but it's easier said than done.

Nottingham-born health and fitness coach Joanne Henson knows from talking to clients how simple it is to make excuses.

In her new book 'What's Your Excuse...For Not Eating Healthily?' she has taken some of the best - and worst - reasons with her suggestions on how to overcome them.

She says: "I wrote the book to help people who want to feel healthier and look and feel better, but who struggle to stick with diets and healthy eating - people who have tried different diets and eating styles in the past, but find that they slip up for the same reasons - excuses that is - over and over again."

"Everyone talked about starting out with good intentions but their resolve weakened over time until they got to a point where they just gave up - and many of them had been to slimming clubs over and over again, losing weight then putting it back on again every time."

"My intention is to help them take a fresh look at their own behaviour and struggles, and suggest some new approaches so that they can start thinking about food in different ways."

"I'm hoping it comes across as supportive and not preaching. I believe people should stop beating themselves up over food choices and understand that eating good, healthy food is a positive, empowering thing."

Joanne admits she was an expert at making excuses in the past, particularly this one which will sound familiar to many struggling dieters.

"I used to be an 'I'll start again on Monday' person. I'd do well for the first couple of days of the week, then succumb to the office biscuit mountain on Wednesday, then say, 'well I've blown it now so I may as well pig out for the rest of the week and start again on Monday'."

"A few biscuits mid-week are not going to undo a whole week

### Three top excuses

The book contains the lamest excuses ever, so next time you utter one of these, remember Joanne's advice:

■ 'I don't like cottage cheese' - Then don't eat it. There are hundreds of other foods which are healthy and tasty.

■ 'I've messed up so I will start again tomorrow' - One muffin or chocolate bar isn't going to undo several days of healthy eating so don't see one slip up as a complete failure.

■ 'I deserved a treat' - You're not a dog!

about having the occasional treat, I was able to get straight back to the good food again, and that's when my health started to improve."

Another toughie is being unable to resist packets of half-opened biscuits and cakes. "I ate the whole packet, even if I felt full," admits Joanne.

"So I learnt to buy individual portions rather than having family-sized packs in the house. If the food's not there you don't need willpower!"

Joanne, who also used to hate PE as a pupil at Bluecoat School in Aspley and didn't take an interest in exercise until her 20s, added: "It is worth reminding yourself of your reasons for wanting to eat well in the first place."

One of her tips is to jot down the reasons for wanting to improve eating habits - such as having more energy and being able to buy fashionable clothes - to serve as a reminder when swayed by a packet of Hob-Nobs.

One of the most common excuses is that healthy food is boring. Low-fat cottage cheese, rice cakes, lettuce and skimmed milk just don't hit the spot.

Joanne says: "They all seem pretty boring to me too and I don't eat them."

"Items that are low calorie or low-fat are more processed than

Tip: Joanne Henson says eating healthy food is positive and empowering.



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Instead, find something healthy that you do like.

Joanne said: "I recommend that people snack on things like nuts, hummus, roasted vegetables, fruit, coconut - but I also just recommend that people should try more new foods and be more imaginative."

"Someone who says they don't like fruit might be talking about bananas and apples, but they'd probably really enjoy strawberries or pineapple."

"Or someone who says they don't like salad could be talking about the standard lettuce-tomato-cucumber combination, but if they incorporated different ingredients such as sun-dried tomatoes, avocados,

addictive. The mood-enhancing chemicals are in such small quantities that they have no real effect."

"I've also heard claims that people are addicted to chocolate because they are deficient in magnesium. Many other foods, like green leafy vegetables, contain higher levels but no-one ever claims to be addicted to spinach," said Joanne.

People who declare themselves chocoholics usually smile, sometimes with thinly veiled pride.

Joanne said: "So if you are one of these people ask yourself 'are you using the term to give yourself permission to indulge

leftovers. There's no harm in swiping a carrot stick or a bit of banana but hands off chicken nuggets, chips and pizza."

Joanne's advice? Get the kids to clear their plates and put the leftovers in the bin.

A typical excuse at this time of year is needing comfort food because of the cold.

Joanne said: "Comfort food doesn't need to translate into stodgy pies and puddings. There are lots of comforting nutritious options on a cold wintry night such as chunky soups, stews, casseroles, spiced winter fruits. Where is the comfort when it turns to Spring and you can't get in your jeans?"

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veal where the problem lies about how much you are putting on your plate, and how much you might be stealing from your partner's plate and the amount of calories you might be consuming in liquid form such as lattes and smoothies," said Joanne.

A common dilemma for office workers is being surrounded by treats.

Joanne says if it's something you wouldn't buy yourself then give it a miss. "Wait and buy yourself your favourite type of