

Chocolotherapy

Satisfying the Deepest Cravings
of Your Inner Chick

KAREN SCALF LINAMEN



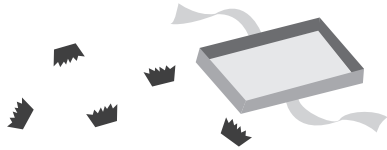
Contents

Appetizer 9

1. Hungry for a Change? 13
2. Visibility 21
3. Escape 33
4. Love 41
5. Perspective 52
6. Community 69
7. Context 80
8. Viscosity 93
9. Sleep 102
10. Clarity 111
11. Control 124
12. Transformation 137

The Chocolaphile Files 151

Hungry for a Change?



I listened to my latest cell phone message and winced at the familiar voice. The poor woman deserved a medal. Maybe even cash prizes and gifts from our sponsor. Definitely a pat on the back.

“Hi Karen, Debbie again. Cheyenne and I came by earlier today with your cookies . . . I guess we missed you! We’ll try again tomorrow.”

I would have gladly called her back and told her when I’d be home, but she never left a phone number and each time she called, the word “unavailable” came up on my caller ID.

This tenacious woman had, to date, driven to my house on five different occasions trying to deliver the Girl Scout cookies I’d ordered from her daughter a month ago.

The good news is that she finally reached me by phone one Sunday afternoon. The bad news is that she woke me out of a dead sleep.

Groggy, I slurred, “Sure, anytime this afternoon’s fine. When’ll you be over?”

She said, “Actually, I’m calling from your driveway.”

I felt bad answering the door with sleep wrinkles on my face and mascara smudges around my eyes, but after all I’d put her through already, I figured my beauty faux pas were the least of her concerns.

I invited her in, and we sat down at my kitchen table for the ceremonious writing of the check and cookie handoff. As she gathered her things to leave, I apologized for the game of hide-and-seek.

“No bother at all,” she said lightly, waving my apology aside. “I’m glad it worked out. Last week the troop leader and I were selling cookies in front of the supermarket, and she asked if all my orders had been delivered. I told her they were all gone except for this one. She said we should combine your cookies with the ones we were selling at the supermarket, since sometimes people buy cookies out of obligation, not because they really want them. But I said no, you really wanted these cookies and I’d get them to you eventually. I told her, ‘I could

be wrong about this woman, but I don’t think so.’”

I was touched. I’d only met this woman for five minutes last month when she showed up on my doorstep with her daughter. What a discerning person she was to realize I wasn’t one of those deadbeat customers who ordered cookies merely



“When women are depressed, they eat or go shopping.

Men invade another country. It’s a whole different way of thinking.”

Elayne Boosler

out of obligation and then abandoned their orders.

I said humbly, “Thank you for not giving up on me! But what made you so sure?”

She said, “One box? Maybe. But *nobody* feels obligated to buy fourteen boxes of cookies.”

Now that I think about it, maybe I *should* strive to be one of those deadbeats who orders cookies merely to feed her social conscience. I can only imagine what it would be like to invite a friend over for coffee, open a box of Girl Scout cookies, take one daintily, and reject the rest while saying nonchalantly, “I’m merely eating this cookie out of obligation. It’s the least I can do for such a fine organization that has done so much for so many generations of deserving young women!”

It’s a fun fantasy. Unfortunately, the truth is that I do *not* consume caramel-drizzled cookies out of obligation. I don’t do chocolate for charity, and my addiction to pecan praline ice cream is not driven by philanthropy.

So why *do* I flock to junk food? And—more importantly—what’s the first step toward change?

“What you see before you, my friend, is the result of a lifetime of chocolate.”



Katharine Hepburn

The Truth about Kit Kats and Corn Dogs

They say a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. I say it starts with a trip to the bathroom. Or maybe a visit to the ATM. The other thing that can launch that kind of journey is an epiphany. I had that

kind of moment recently. I was working on the outline for this book, sitting at my desk with a computer mouse in one hand and a box of Lucky Charms in the other, when it dawned on me that the first step toward change is a willingness to seek the truth.

Emotional eating and truth don't usually go hand in hand. In fact, denial often launches our binges as we eat to avoid pain or stress. And once we start eating, denial keeps us going strong. After all, when we're in the grip of a really good binge—the kind that can last

A tasty sample from
The Chocolophile Files

“For dessert, chocolate is truly the only choice—everything else, no matter how elaborate, is just a disappointing substitute.

Recently my husband brought home a five-pound bag of M&M's, thinking I would be thrilled at the sight of them. Instead I found myself filled with dread. . . . How is it that the thing you crave the most can simultaneously inflict such a deep fear of losing self-control and gaining weight?”

Diana Bender

anywhere from a couple of minutes to a couple of decades—do we *really* want to know how many calories or carbs we're consuming or even how much we weigh? I think not. This is why whenever I step on a doctor's scale, I close my eyes, stick my fingers in my ears, and hum “The Star-Spangled Banner.” The *last* thing I want is to see the numbers or accidentally hear the nurse gasp as she records my weight.

But lately I've been trying something new. Lately, whenever chaos, change, or crisis threatens to send me on a junk food safari, I've tried hunting for the truth

instead. I've been doing this by asking myself three things:

1. Am I experiencing any discernable signs of real hunger? Stomach pains? Fatigue? Growls? Headache? Anything at all?
2. If not, then what am I feeling right now? Sadness? Loss? Stress? What is it? Can I put a name to my emotions?
3. If I close my eyes and imagine myself experiencing different emotions or circumstances, do I hit on anything that makes this craving suddenly feel a little less urgent?

I did this the other morning. I had just dropped my eleven-year-old daughter, Kacie, off at school when I found myself wrestling with a supersized craving for a McDonald's McGriddles breakfast sandwich. With no Golden Arches in sight, I was giving serious thought to driving several miles out of my way when I decided to do a little soul searching instead.

I asked myself, *Am I experiencing any discernable signs of real hunger?* The answer was no.

Okay, then what am I feeling right now? I didn't need to be a rocket scientist to figure that one out. I was feeling discouraged because I'd recently put on thirty pounds.

Finally I asked myself, *If I close my eyes and imagine myself experiencing different emotions or circumstances, what happens to my craving? Does it wax or wane?* I imagined a bunch of different scenarios. Suddenly I

envisioned a scenario that made a difference. It was me, five pounds trimmer after a few weeks of healthy eating under my belt—or out from under my belt, as the case may be. Suddenly I felt a surge—both imagined and real—of hope. Wow! Who knew? Apparently the thing I was *really* craving was hope. Hope and maybe a little momentum. I realized these were the missing elements because, in the process of merely *thinking* about hope and momentum, I felt that McGriddles sandwich start to shrink from an overgrown obsession back into an ordinary breakfast food.

That was the really amazing part. It didn't seem to matter whether I actually *experienced* these new emotions and circumstances or simply *thought about* experiencing them. All I had to do was identify and envision the thing I was *really* craving and suddenly my splurge urge seemed tamable, kind of like when a half-ton Siberian tiger shrinks into a teacup kitten or—at the very least—a mid-sized Jaguar, air bags optional.

In the meantime, I've been checking with other women, asking them about the kinds of emotions and circumstances that do the same for them. And what I'm finding is that deep inside—somewhere beneath that uncontrollable urge to eat, shop, decorate, read romance novels, work out, scrapbook, spend time online, or anything else we embrace in excess—we're all pretty much craving the same stuff.

What *are* we craving?

Hope and momentum, definitely. We also crave community and perspective. Sometimes we long for transformation; at other times the thing we need the most is

grace. We also desire answers and some sort of context in which to place those answers. Unconditional love is a biggie, as is clarity.

I'm even learning that sometimes what we're *really* craving are the resources and knowledge to manage the hormones in our own bodies. I've been doing some research on the biology of the binge, and turns out there are reasons why chaos, change, and crisis send us foraging. Yes, Virginia, there really *are* hormones at work in our bodies that make us crave junk food. Cravings are not necessarily about willpower. Sometimes they're the result of stuff going on in our bodies, meaning what we're really craving might be as basic as more serotonin or less cortisol in our systems, or even just a good night's sleep.

So these are the kinds of things we'll be exploring in the rest of this book. And by the time the final chapter brings us to the end of our little adventure, I have a feeling we'll each have made some valuable discoveries along the way.

Are you hungry for a change? If so, the next time you feel the urge to merge with all nineteen doughnuts left over from your son's science club meeting, reach for the truth instead. Ask yourself the questions I mentioned earlier to determine what you're *really* feeling.

Then pay attention to your answers.

In the meantime, let's take a look at a few of the *real* cravings that are in my life, in the lives of women I know, and most certainly in your life as well.

We'll start with our craving for visibility or, in other words, our longing to be known.

Living the Sweet Life

- What's wrong with downing a warm plate of mac-n-cheese when you're blue or a couple doughnuts when you're stressed? Is emotional eating *always* a bad idea, or can it serve a purpose? When do you think it crosses a line and can become a problem?
- Even if emotional eating isn't an issue for you, the topics in this book will still apply to you. Bottom line, this book is about the things you and I crave, things like unconditional love, a good dose of grace now and then, a healthy perspective on the things going on in our lives, clarity of thinking, and a sense of belonging to a vibrant community. Do any of these hit home for you? What can you add to the list? What are *you* hungry for?
- In the past, when something you craved didn't seem readily attainable—maybe you craved love but were single, or you longed for community but had just moved to a new city and didn't know a soul—how did you cope? Did you turn to food? Shopping? Alcohol? Prayer? Taking risks? However you coped, did it help you attain what you were *really* craving, or did it hinder your efforts?

