

## Being Hot Fudge Sundaes

By Geneen Roth

It's never been true, not anywhere at anytime, that the value of a soul, of a human spirit is dependent on a number on a scale. We are unrepeatable beings of light and space and water who need these physical vehicles to get around, and when we start defining ourselves by that which can be measured or weighed, something deep within us rebels.

We don't want to *eat* hot fudge sundaes as much as we want our lives to *be* hot fudge sundaes. We want to come home to ourselves. We want to know wonder and mystery and possibility, and if instead, we've given up on ourselves, if we've vacated our longings, if we've left possibility behind, we will feel an emptiness we can't name. We will feel as if something is missing because something is missing—the connection to the source of all sweetness, all love, all power, all peace, all joy, all stillness. Since we had it once--we were born with and as it—it can't help but haunt us. It's as if our cells remember that home is a resplendent and jeweled palace but we've been living as beggars for so long that we are no longer certain if the palace was a dream. And if it was a dream, then at least we can eat the memory of it.

During the first few bites, and before we get dazed by overeating, everything we want is possible. Everything we've lost is here now. And so we settle for the concrete version of our lost selves in the form of food. And once food has become synonymous with goodness or love or fulfillment, you cannot help but choose it, no matter how high the stakes are. No matter if your doctor tells you that you won't live another month at this weight. Because when you are lost, when you are homeless, when you've spent years separated from who you are, threats of failed hearts or joint pressure don't move you. Dying does not frighten those who are already half-dead.

The most challenging part of any system that addresses weight-related issues is that unless it also addresses the part of you that wants something you can't name—the heart of your heart, not the size of your thighs—it won't work. We don't want to be thin because thinness is inherently life-affirming or lovable or healthy. If these were true, there would be no tribes in Africa in which women are fat and regal and long-living. There would be

no history of matriarchies in which women's fecundity and pulchritude were worshipped.

We want to be thin because thinness is the purported currency of happiness and peace and contentment. And although that currency is a lie — the tabloids are filled with skinny miserable celebrities — most systems of weight loss fail because they don't live up to their promise: weight loss does not make people happy. Or peaceful. Or content. Being thin does not address the emptiness that has no shape or weight or name. Even a wildly successful diet is a colossal failure because inside the new body is the same sinking heart. Spiritual hunger can never be solved on the physical level.