FOOD: THE GREAT REPLACEMENT

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[Assignment: Analyze the immediate and ultimate causes and/or effects of one of the following subjects, or another suggested by them. (Be careful that your analysis does not develop into a mere listing of superficial "reasons" or "results.")]}

(1) Overeating is a common phenomenon in the United States today, as is evidenced by the large number of overweight people, the high rate of heart and artery disease, and the number of cases of high blood pressure. The people of our country have access to the best food supply in the world, and often they abuse this access by overeating. Why is it that so many people are addicted to this habit?

(2) People overeat for several reasons. One common cause is stress or nervousness. It's similar to a cigarette smoker lighting up to "calm his nerves." Students stressed out over tests or social relationships may use food in the same way. After a hard day at the office, an adult may relax over a large meal, eating away at his anxieties until his stomach is full and the edge is taken off his worries. A bag of chips or a sandwich effectively keeps the hands, as well as the mind, of the eater occupied, effectively helping him forget his stress.

(3) Another common cause of overeating is depression. People may drown their sorrows in food much the same way they would in drugs or alcohol. A bowl of ice cream makes a welcome companion when watching television alone on a weekend night, when the sting of depression may hit hard. Everyone else is out having a good time, and there you are, feeling low. Food becomes a pick-me-up. Someone fighting low esteem may say, "Hey, I'm already pretty bad off. I might as well eat. If I get fat, who's going to care?" Eating is a comfort. It soothes feelings as tummies get full and sleepiness replaces the pain of loneliness and depression. Food becomes a security blanket, an always present friend when things are going badly.

(4) Perhaps the most common cause of overeating is plain, sheer boredom. You're sitting in your dorm room, tired of studying, and there isn't much else going on so you grab the popcorn popper or order a pizza because eating will kill some time. Or you may be out cruising the strip, and it's pretty obvious that nothing much is happening. So, to fill the time, you and your friends pull into the nearest Hardee's or McDonald's for a hamburger and fries. Eating is something to do—it's an alternative to doing nothing, or a replacement for the things you don't want to do, like studying. It's a change of pace, a time filler.
(5) Finally, people may overeat as a result of how they were brought up as children, a result of how they were taught to view food. It is these habits, carried over from childhood, that cause many people to overeat. If, as a child, your cries were appeased with food, you may find that as an adult that you are still pampering yourself in the same way. If a trip to the Dairy Queen was a childhood reward for "being a good boy at the dentist," you may still be rewarding yourself with high-calorie goodies. If your family was into food, it can carry over into your adult life. Years of watching Uncle Joe and other relatives eat huge helpings of food and then go back for more takes its toll. If being a "clean plater" was important at the dinner table, you may still feel obliged to eat more than necessary. What bad habits children pick up early, such as faulty eating patterns like overeating, may cause a problem in adult life.

(6) Different people overeat for different reasons. Our society as a whole glamorizes and encourages eating, as anyone who has witnessed a Pizza Hut or Burger King commercial can attest. Food become something besides a source of nourishment—it eases anxieties, gives feelings of security, drowns sorrows, and fills empty hours. Food can be a social tool, as in getting together for dinner with friends. Our society uses food in many ways, many of them bad, and as a result, there are many overweight, unhealthy people in it.