

~~Keche Linn~~~~Prof. B. B. B.~~

Writing 1310

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### What are You Hungry For?

More and more, the average student's diet seems to revolve around the phrase "May I take your order?" And, as if the fast food itself was not unhealthy enough already, one notable phrase would have to be "Would you like that super-sized?" With fast food vendors around every corner, it is no wonder America is now known to have one of the highest obesity rates in the world. But just why is it that students continue to eat such unhealthy foods even when we know it is not good for our overall health? Are we balancing too much on our plates to make a decent plate of healthy food at home? Or are we too caught up with the media to understand their false advertisements that constantly lure us in to try some new delicious combo? So with all information available for healthy eating, why do students continue to make poor food choices?

Our advertisers are a story all in themselves. From commercials with their ooey, gooey chocolate fudge brownie milkshake to Taco Bell's fourth meal, advertisers have mastered a way to pull us from our comfortable homes and into their greasy fast food lines. Why do we continue to fall into this grease pit? Take a closer look at their commercials. I have never seen a fast food commercial where the actors were not in their mid twenties, well dressed in the latest fashions, or performing some kind of rigorous outdoor activity. They know that customers will not feel as good about eating their food if their commercials advertise with someone who is obese or "not cool enough". Remember those fast food jingles? I often thought they were annoying and pointless until one day I started singing one and it led me to where I was going to eat lunch that

day. Plus, if I keep singing their song, most likely someone else is going to end up singing it too. The more people singing their fast food jingle, the more people that will think about eating their food. Each word or phrase in a commercial is arranged to be embedded in our memory through repetition and/or a rhyme scheme. A well thought out system that continues to bring millions of people into their doors every day.

Take the students at our very own University of Central Arkansas's campus for example. We are given the opportunity to eat in the cafeteria or at the food court every day of the week. The food court is always crammed with students getting in line for Pizza Hut, Chick-fil-A, Quizno's, and even sushi. While observing the students and fighting this crazy lunch crowd, I happened to notice a lone refrigerator and chose to stand by it to get out of the way. As I got closer to the refrigerator I discovered that this was the vegetable and dessert section of the food court. During the time that I observed and even while I was eating, the only items that ever left the refrigerator were desserts. On the tables, almost every student had purchased personal pan pepperoni or sausage pizzas and they were slurping down large caffeinated beverages. A few individuals had chosen chicken, but about nine out of ten tables were greasy, cheesy pizzas.

Why do we do this to ourselves? Our cafeteria provides a wide variety of foods that can be pieced together into a well balanced meal. Meat, vegetables, and the salad bar are all healthy choices that are offered every day. Again, even with these options available, students' plates most often ended up piled with pizza or covered with a large burger and a stack of greasy French fries. It was interesting to watch the students who would start out their meal with meat and vegetables, eat half of it, scoot it aside, and then hop right back in the line to grab a couple of slices of pizza. There were several students that chose the salad bar, but any salad covered in croutons, bacon bits, and saturated in ranch dressing, would no longer be considered healthy.

us feel full and in turn, often makes us forget to think about our meal proportions. A salad can be just as satisfying as other meals, but because of its cold, crispy leaves the salad will leave a person feeling as if they have hardly eaten anything at all. In fact, a salad is most likely served in serving size proportions but since leafy vegetables are out of our comfort zone, we will refuse to believe we enjoyed or became satisfied by these “foreign” foods.

While talking with UCA freshman Katelyn Bengston, I mentioned having comfort foods and asked her opinion about them. “Oh I know exactly what you are talking about. My comfort food is a little different though. I tend to grab snacks when I am stressed or have been studying for long periods of time and need something to perk me back up.” Do we seek food to calm our nerves? I know that I have often felt the same way, seeking a snack to feel “comforted.” “I know it is not good for me, but sometimes I do really need something to cheer me up. I do try to eat semi-healthy snacks though.” Often times, “comfort foods” are specific foods that we associate with good memories. For example, mashed potatoes are one of my comfort foods because they remind me of home. The downside is that they are not the healthiest food to have. Consequently, we must find a healthy medium. We need to find comfort foods which have at least some health benefit to them so that we do not let an unhealthy lifestyle overtake us.

Statistics of obesity and the knowledge about the health risks of fast food are easily obtainable. The effects it can have on our bodies and our overall health is evident in all of our daily lives. However, none of this information seems to have an effect on the food choices that we make every day. Our occasional “treat” to go out to eat turns into an everyday affair and can lead our health spiraling down. Yet, without a doubt, the lines for fast food will be out the door and more students will be engorging themselves with what they think is “good” food. I’m not sure of what it will take to get students to understand the potential risk of eating greasy, fattening

fast food, but maybe it is time to slow down our hectic pace and realize what we are actually eating.

Works Cited

Bengston, Katelyn. Personal Interview. 26 September 2009.

DePriest, Amber. Personal Interview. 11 September 2009.