Where are you in your Journey?  
A Timeline for SUCCESS!

PRE-OP
What about insurance coverage?
Insurance companies and employers' coverage for morbid obesity is constantly changing. We have developed a dedicated staff who will be happy to assist you during the insurance approval process.

RECOVERY PHASE
What is the right amount of exercise after Gastric Bypass?
Many patients are hesitant to exercise after surgery but in reality, exercise is an absolutely essential component of success after surgery. Exercise begins on the afternoon of surgery. You will be out of bed and walking. The goal is for the patient to walk further on the next day and progressively further every day after that, including the first few weeks at home.

We usually release the patients from medical restrictions and encourage them to begin exercising regularly after the first post-operative office visit which normally occurs within one to two weeks after surgery. Patients are limited only by the level of incision discomfort. Some patients who have severe knee problems may not be able to walk well but almost all can swim or bicycle. Many patients begin with low stress forms of exercise and we encourage them to progress to more vigorous activity when they are able. Sexual activity is okay from two weeks onward, again as dictated by comfort level.

August Meeting Topic: Retrain Your Brain

Managing Your Food Triggers
There are a number of ways to change a food trigger's path. These few steps may help in changing your long-standing patterns with food, whether you are addicted or not.

- Become mindful of your food patterns. Do not judge whether your pattern is good or bad, just become aware of what it is.
- Keep a food journal. This is one of the easiest ways to be mindful of your food patterns and to hold yourself accountable to them.
- Decide if the habit is serving you. Let's face it — if you were not getting something out of a habit, you would not be doing it. That does not mean you decided it was serving you. Perhaps it became a habit over time, or perhaps your brain is reacting to the hyper-palatable food you are consuming. In either case, decide if what you really want to be doing is consuming the food that causes you to feel shame, blame, and guilt afterwards. Be intentional in your decisions.
- Make a game plan. You know your pattern, so how are you going to intervene and change the direction? How will you replace the food trigger behavior? Come up with a few ideas and write them down. Sometimes the act of being intentional about food decisions is enough to make you stop reaching for a trigger food.
- Continue to re-evaluate. What alternative coping strategy did you commit to using? How did it work for you? If it did not work, why not? What are you going to do differently next time?

In short: have a plan and put the plan to work!

Upstate University Hospital's Bariatric Program:
For all your Bariatric needs and concerns, make sure to contact the Center at (315) 492-5036
Habitual eating is a tricky thing – partially because all of us do it. Just think of turkey at Thanksgiving, cake on your birthday or popcorn at a movie. We have been taught, through our unique experiences in life, to associate food with certain emotions or habits, but for some people, these triggers can lead to unfavorable behaviors.

Why are food triggers more problematic for some people than others? And why can some people ignore them altogether, while for others, it can cause an all-out binge eating episode? The answer could lie in a person’s risk of developing food addiction.

The Science Behind Food Triggers
To put it simply, some researchers say that when we are exposed to “hyper-palatable foods” – foods that are highly processed or are high in added sugar or fat – parts of our brains light up similar to the parts in the brain that light up in response to drugs. If our brain reacts to sugar the same way it reacts to an addictive substance, there will be people who are at risk for using that sugar in a damaging way – just like alcohol or cocaine. Because of this response, the brain will trigger the “sugar-user” to eat more sugar.

Just as some people can have a couple of drinks after work and not have it lead to alcohol abuse, some people can eat hyper-palatable foods and not have it lead to an over-consumption of food. On the other hand, for those brains or those with genetics who are at risk for an addiction, eating certain trigger foods can lead to a damaging and consistent over-consumption of food, without the person realizing why they are overeating.

Food addiction is not yet recognized as a diagnosable disease, and some even question its existence. Researchers do say that if food addiction is real, it likely only affects a small percentage of the population (about 2 percent), meaning those who will actually be diagnosed as “addicted” to food would be a small percentage, although a much larger percentage may be “affected” by the food but not considered addicted.

For the rest of the population that struggles to maintain a healthy relationship with food, food triggers become less of a science and more of an individualized issue. We all have an emotional relationship with food, and we have all created patterns around food that form as we move through our lives. For some, however, food becomes a coping strategy that is used to reduce negative feelings. Some turn to food in the face of triggers such as habit, boredom or stress.

The Myth of Comfort Food
We’ve all heard the term “comfort food,” but what does it really mean? Is the food itself actually comforting, or is it our emotional attachment to the food that creates the illusion of comfort? In a NASA funded study, researchers at the University of Minnesota found no measurable differences in mood when given comfort food, a neutral food or no food at all. What this might mean is that it is not the ingredients in macaroni and cheese that makes you feel comforted by food, but instead it is the emotional connection you believe you have to macaroni and cheese. If this is true, the same argument can be made that food doesn’t make you feel better – it is all in your mind. If it is all in your mind, then you have the power to change your emotional connection to food. You have the power to channel those emotions into a healthier coping mechanism — one that will not leave you feeling shame and guilt after you’ve engaged it.

The same is true for those who could be diagnosed as “addicted” to food. Even if you believe you are addicted to food, you still have to make decisions every day about the type of food you are going to consume. If you continue to make food decisions based on emotions or triggers, no matter what the explanation is, you will likely find yourself over-consuming calories you do not want or need.

Conclusion
Regardless of the reason you may be struggling with food triggers, the keys to lasting change are mindfulness, accountability and consistent change. You can retrain your brain to follow different actions once you are aware of patterns that aren’t serving you.

http://www.obesityaction.org/educational-resources/resource-articles-2/nutrition/retrain-your-brain-how-to-change-your-habitual-eating-patterns