

# Dear Dietitian

Dear Readers,

Many of us know someone who has struggled with addiction. Perhaps a loved one has tried to quit smoking, or a friend is addicted to heroin or methamphetamine. The American Psychiatric Association defines addiction as a complex condition, a brain disease manifested by compulsive substance use despite harmful consequences. (1) Although food addiction is not included in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders), it is estimated that as many as twenty percent of Americans struggle with some type of food compulsion (2).

One may automatically assume that food addiction only affects overweight individuals; however, the scientific literature shows otherwise. While some individuals with obesity may display behaviors similar to individuals addicted to drugs [3], estimates suggest that only 24.9% of overweight/obese individuals report clinically-significant symptoms of food addiction, and 11.1% of healthy-weight individuals also report these symptoms [2].

Studies have found parallels between food addiction and other substance abuse disorders, such as opioid addiction. Some of these include:

Changes in brain chemistry in response to the substance – For example, dopamine is released in response

to certain foods. Dopamine is a chemical that plays a role in the reward center in our brain and allows us to feel pleasure. If we experience pleasure and reward, we are likely to repeat the behavior, even to the point that it is no longer healthy for us.

Preoccupation with the substance – One may obsess about a particular food, feel deprived of happiness in the absence of this food, or experience cravings.

Impaired control – Once the substance or food is taken in, it is difficult to maintain control of how much is consumed.

Social impairments – This includes changes in your social activities for the sake of the addiction. For example, a person binges on a certain food, then spends hours exercising to burn off those calories rather than spending time with family and friends.

How do you deal with a food addiction? If you can completely abstain from the problem food, that is your best defense. It may be difficult to completely abstain from sugar since it is in so many foods. You can abstain from sweets or avoid foods with 5 grams of sugar or more per serving.

Another solution is a 12-step program, Overeaters Anonymous, which helps those with food addictions and eating disorders. Theirs is a spiritual (not religious) program similar

to that of Alcoholics Anonymous. Go to [oa.org](http://oa.org) or call (505) 891-2664 to find a meeting near you.

## References

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Until next time, be healthy!

Dear Dietitian



Leanne McCrate, RDN, LD, aka Dear Dietitian, is an award-winning dietitian based in Missouri. Her mission is to educate consumers on sound, scientifically-based nutrition. Do you have a nutrition question? Email her today at [deardietitian411@gmail.com](mailto:deardietitian411@gmail.com). Dear Dietitian does not endorse any products, health programs, or diet plans.

# Reynolds takes reins as RSES principal

By Lisa Coffey  
Times Journal

When school starts back this month, Russell Springs Elementary students and teachers will be welcoming a new principal.

Kevin Reynolds will be taking the reins as former principal Rene Gossage retired at the end of the last school year.

Reynolds, a Madison County native, moved to Russell County in 2005.

He has taught in Garrard, Madison and Adair Counties at the beginning of his career.

Most recently, he was assistant principal at Casey County High School before completing his last two years there as principal.

“I thought it was God’s timing to come home,” Reynolds explained. “I was extremely happy with my job (At Casey County). I worked with lots of great people, but you know, it was just time to come home.”

Of the three elementary schools in Russell County, Russell Springs Elementary is the largest. Reynolds doesn’t want its enormity to overshadow the fact that Russell Springs Elementary School (RSES) is a caring, student-centered school which strives to insure all students are loved and cared for by a committed staff that support all students’ needs—inside or outside the classroom.

“I think a lot of times you get kind of a bad stigma when you’re the biggest school in the county,” Reynolds said. “Some of the outlier schools seem like they are more family oriented or they’re more close knit, but you know, I just don’t see that. The more you have, the more there is to love, the more there is to do, and the more opportunity there is to thrive and flourish.”

Reynolds has already met some of the teachers and staff and plans on meeting with everyone and getting to know them all better.

The teachers and staff are hard at work preparing the school for the students they will welcome on the first day of school, August 17.

“To see them come in as team members and groups already getting their classrooms ready for their students is encouraging,” Reynolds said. “Our custodial staff has done a great job getting the school cleaned up and the floors waxed.”

The new principal has an optimistic philosophy.

“I’m just really pushing that we are a family, and there’s nothing we can’t do,” he said. “We are going to love these kids—it’s all for these kids.”

Reynolds is well aware of the reality some students are facing.

“It’s a perilous time for kids,” he said. “There are so many broken homes and abuse. With



Kevin Reynolds

everything that goes on, we are not sheltered from it in this community and neither is anyone around us.”

Reynolds wants parents and caregivers to know that he is accessible and available to them to answer questions or address any concerns they might have.

“We, as a school, and myself, as a leader, are going to do everything the right way to educate their child—to make their child a productive member of society,” the principal said. “I want them to know they (students) are safe here—they are going to be loved here. Any concern they (parents) have...I want them to reach out to us 1000 percent to call if they have any concern or any need that needs to be addressed. We want to know about it.”

Russell Springs Elementary will hold its open house August 9, from 5-7 p.m.

All parents/guardians are invited to attend.

## Kids going back to school?

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