



Are You A Victim of Your Cravings?

August 2010

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.

-Albert Einstein

How to Tackle Your Cravings?

Here I am on July 23rd I appeared on Robin Swoboda's show speaking about understanding our food addictions.

Eating is just so complicated and if we only ate when we were genuinely hungry, more than half of our weight and health problems would go away. Unfortunately though more often than not we are driven to food by our emotions and our thoughts.

Stress, anger, boredom, loneliness, sadness are just a few of the feelings that make us want to eat. Why? Because food makes us feel good, it soothes us and it comforts us when we need it the most. It becomes a vicious cycle of feeling bad and eating comfort food to feel good, which makes us feel worse and Alas it leads to more cravings to make us feel better.

Add to this the guilt and the self-punishment we put on our selves during this pattern, which stresses us and depresses us even more, well you get the perfect nutritional storm of being a perpetual emotional eater and a victim of your cravings.

So next time your emotions hit, instead of reaching for food consider these easy steps:

What can you do? Here are 4 easy steps to help you next time a craving comes up.

Awareness

In order to change any behavior you first need to be aware of it. When you are moving through the day so fast, shoving food in your mouth faster than you can chew, many times you are not aware of what you are. Slow down or even better, STOP! Just stop for 30 seconds and take the time to ask yourself "why am I reaching for food? Am I physically hungry? Am I actually experiencing hunger



pangs, low energy or fatigue or am I just reacting to something else that is happening?

These 30 seconds alone will help you raise Awareness around your behavior and your habits, shedding some light and understanding of why you eat when you eat

Investigate

By raising awareness around your habits, you might start seeing specific eating and craving trends during the day or during the week. For example, I had a client who had the pattern of just absolutely cleaning her refrigerator out on Sunday nights. All afternoon and all evening on Sundays she found herself snacking and grazing almost uncontrollably. We ended up resolving the situation and realized that she hated her job and would get so stressed about having to go back to work on Mondays that she had built this pattern of comforting and distracting herself from this uncomfortable stressful feeling with food.

This step of uncovering triggers to your cravings, becomes SO much easier when you have a small food journal in which you can write down not just what you ate but what time of the day, where were you when you were eating, with whom, and how did you feel before and after you ate.

So for you too, consider what times of the day do you tend to “crave” foods?
Is it mostly mornings or evenings?
What else is going on at the time?
What feelings surface; Anxiety, anger, loneliness, boredom?
Do these feelings subside after eating?

Be critical, objective and open so you can see whatever is there and not what you think is there. Most importantly be non-judgmental! The purpose of this is not to punish your self or feel guilty. The purpose is to uncover some feelings, situations or relationships that might be causing your anxiety, pain and stress.

Resolve

Here comes the challenge! Because YES, you do have to resolve the underlying cause that is creating the craving. Once you build awareness by journaling your eating habits, investigate your patterns and reflect upon each “binge” or “grazing” episode, now you actually have some answers!

This is good news! You are no longer a Victim to food; you are no longer a hostage to mindless eating. Now you have a better understanding of why you do what you do.

Don't you automatically feel better by knowing that you have control over the situation and you can resolve it?



Take action

This where you decide how you are going to fix the problem, nourish the need if it is emotional or change your mind shift if it is mental. Up till now everything was conceptual and on paper. Now we have to actually put some of the resolutions, ideas and actions to work.

IF you find the cravings are due to stress and anxiety you need to resolve the issue.

IF the cravings are due to lack of organization you could work on improving your time-management and organization skills at home and at work. Why hustle in the morning with making lunches, breakfast and finding what to wear? These can all be addressed the night before so you have more time in the morning to enjoy your breakfast, have your cup of tea and start the day in a much calmer manner that will put you and the rest of the family in a great mood for the rest of the day.

If the cravings are due to lack of proper nutrition from erratic eating or lack of home cooked meals you will have to start planning your meals for the week, so you are not as stressed during the week of having to run to the store and come up with dinner at 730pm at night. Go grocery shopping on the weekend, to save time from having to shop and cook during the week. Prepare a lot of your ingredients on Sunday night and plan on making some dishes in advance.

IF the cravings are due to fatigue, you will have to consider drinking more water, getting adequate sleep and again making sure that your body is getting a balanced amount of nutritious food.

Don't forget to ask for help from friends and family that can share some of the kitchen responsibilities and support you, or from an expert, who will help you troubleshoot any issues and provide you with ideas, tools and accountability to translate your thoughts into actions and resolve the underlying issues that can be causing your cravings and holding your health back.

To your health,

Dina

PS. I would love to hear back from you now. Do you know what is causing your cravings? Have you come up with a solution to resolve it? Let me know what you uncover in this journey of self-discovery.