

Integrative Approaches to Avoid Overeating

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How to Get Off the Restriction-Binge Cycle and Stop Overeating:

- **Abstinence**
 - Avoid the drug-like foods, which are sugar, gluten, dairy and flavor additives (e.g., MSG).
 - Sugar hits the reward circuitry of the brain, while gluten and dairy break down into opiate-like substances called gluteomorphin and casomorphine, which act on opiate receptors. If you suspect you are “addicted to food”, this might be the explanation.
- **Eat Regular Meals**
 - Aim for 3 meals and 2 snacks per day. This helps keep blood sugar stable.
 - You want to send a signal to your brain that you’re in a state of abundance, not starvation (which can trigger overeating).
 - Eat when you’re hungry, stop when you’re full.
- **Avoid All Forms of Restriction***
 - Restriction --> binge --> restriction --> binge --> ...
 - You can only truly stop the restriction-binge cycle by stopping restriction.
 - Avoiding restriction means eating regular meals and consuming plenty of protein, healthy fat and carbohydrate. Be sure to eat delicious, satisfying food at every meal.

**You may have noticed an inherent contradiction between step 1 (abstain from sugar/gluten/dairy/MSG) and step 3 (avoid restriction). We have to navigate this delicate balance carefully. Restriction is an unhealthy mental and physical state that begets bingeing. However, I still encourage you to abstain from the drug-like foods. We are trying to re-establish healthy hunger and satiety signals. The drug-like foods operate as addictive substances in the reward circuitry of the brain, overriding hunger and satiety signals, and thereby undermining our efforts to re-establish proper hunger and satiety signals.*
- **Sleep**
 - Get 8 hours of sleep nightly. Ideally from 10/11pm-6/7am.
 - Sleep regulates the hormones involved in appetite, satiety and metabolism.
 - I cannot emphasize this one enough. Adequate sleep is a *significant* factor in establishing healthy hunger and satiety signals, and it is so often overlooked. Make it a priority. Make it *the* priority.
- **Stabilize Blood Sugar**
 - Blood sugar fluctuations can precipitate overeating.
 - Take a spoonful of coconut oil 3 times a day (upon waking, in the afternoon, before bed).
 - Consider starting your day with coffee or tea blended with butter and MCT oil.
 - Always have a snack handy (e.g., nuts, hard-boiled egg, wild salmon jerky, grass-fed beef jerky, dark chocolate, almond butter), so you stay on top of blood sugar while you’re on the go. Don’t wait for the blood sugar crash—*prevent it* with a well-timed snack.
- **Relax**
 - Practice relaxation and stress management (yoga, meditation, breathing exercises).
 - Consider getting energy work (acupuncture, craniosacral therapy, Reiki).
 - Eat mindfully: chew thoroughly and avoid distractions while you eat (TV, computer).
 - Look away from the phone and wake up to you and your surroundings: listen to your body, your emotions and your loved ones.
 - In general, *slow down and listen*.
 - Shift your relationship to food away from self-punishment or self-sabotage and toward eating as an act of self-care and self-love; stop battling with yourself.
 - Imbue your relationship to yourself, your body and your food with love and radical acceptance.

- **Optimize Nutritional Status**
 - o Subtle micronutrient deficiencies can increase appetite (your body is trying to get what it's missing).
 - o Eat a nutrient-dense diet of real food to ensure excellent nutrient status.

Nutrition

- Eat real food.
- Avoid processed food.
- Is it real food? To check, ask yourself: did it grow in the ground or was it a healthy animal?
- The most important foods to avoid are:
 - o Sugar, high fructose corn syrup and artificial sweeteners
 - o Trans fats
 - o Industrial seed oils (e.g., canola oil, corn oil, soybean oil)
 - o Flour
 - o Processed soy
- Shift away from thinking of food as calories and toward food as your opportunity for nutrition.
- Let your plate be half veggies, a quarter protein and a quarter starch.
- What to eat:
 - o All vegetables
 - o Starchy tubers (sweet potatoes, white potatoes, taro, yucca, plantain)
 - o Pastured meat and organ meats (eat every part of the animal)
 - o Pastured poultry and eggs
 - o Wild fish
 - o Fermented foods (sauerkraut, beet kvass, kimchi, miso)
 - o Bone broth
 - o Nuts and seeds
 - o Dark chocolate
 - o Fruit (preferably less sweet fruits like berries and grapefruit)
 - o Sprouted rice and legumes if tolerated
 - o Plenty of natural fats (butter and ghee from grass-fed cows, coconut oil, MCT oil, olive oil, avocados)
 - o Note: if you're avoiding dairy, I recommend that you continue to consume butter
- Here are some real food recommendations:
 - o Seafood: www.vitalchoice.com
 - o Pastured meats: www.grasslandbeef.com
 - o Fermented foods: www.wisechoicemarket.com & www.hawthornevalleyfarm.org
 - o General purpose: www.thrivemarket.com
 - o Sprouted grains & legumes: TruRoots Organic Germinated Rice & Lentils on Amazon
 - o Book recommendation: *The Paleo Cure* by Chris Kresser
- Try to adhere to this approach to eating 80% of the time, and don't lose sight of what makes life fulfilling (social connection, community, enjoyment). Sometimes it's better to eat the wrong food with the right attitude than the other way around (ancient Chinese saying, by way of Chris Kresser).