

Conversation Corner



A Newsletter for Fitness Professionals

Satiety and the Mind-Body Disconnect

When it comes to food, your mind can't hear your body

Your stomach is full, the body's requirements have been met (and then some) but still you don't stop eating. You can't and you don't want to. You're not done, whether it's because there's still something left on your plate, a second helping has always been part of your eating routine, you intend to get your money's worth, it's a dining experience and there's still another course, or maybe you've been on a diet for a while and now you're always "hungry". Or finally, no matter how much you consume during the main course, you have a sweet craving that must be satisfied. Ah dessert: mealtime is never over until the "fat-tooth" sings!

Weight gain and satiety

When weight is trending upward, fullness is a familiar feeling that's often attained. When maintaining weight, we may also experience satiety albeit less frequently. When weight is trending down, satiety is almost never achieved. But many times in all three instances our environment will "coerce" us to keep eating.

There are easily as many reasons why we consistently eat or drink beyond our needs as there are overweight adults in the U.S. The trouble is that the myriad potential solutions have to be individually matched to the right people because of the complexities of human psychology. So people continue to be driven to consume more than they need, and here we are with the dreaded, inevitable, slow-but-steady weight gain that currently engulfs our society.

Reversing weight gain and satiety

An added problem occurs when you do try to reverse unwanted weight gain: *true* satiety becomes virtually non-existent. This is because, as discussed above, the feeling of fullness only happens when the trend is weight gain or at certain times during maintenance. Your body worked hard to store all those extra calories, and based on a left-over survival trait, the goal is to hold onto them for that "rainy day" when there's no available food. This day, of course, never comes. Yep, this is that nagging trace of hunger that never truly abates once you eliminate fat stores your body believes belong there.

Now you know why there's generally no such thing as being regularly full when dieting. The bottom line is that dieting goes against your body's instincts, regardless of whether you're ten pounds or 200 pounds overweight.

When dieting, there are moments of seemingly uncontrollable hunger, and the further you are from your starting weight, the more severe the struggle. You begin to become more & more aware of food; you might obsess over the next meal or feel drawn to pictures or signs of foods. You might also begin to crave foods you never really liked before; you may begin to be annoyed by people eating food around you; your portions mysteriously grow (your "one cup of pasta" is now really 1.5, but you still count it as one, or

somehow you packed it into the same area the true one cup used to fit); and you always clean your plate.

Then it might get worse: you formulate excuses why it's okay to go off the wagon for a meal or two or three . . . and finally you start to plan what you will eat when you eventually lose the weight. Game over.

No, as we have said many times before, dieting is not natural and it's the small population of people who succeed at weight control who appear to have "beat the body's system". That system is no longer needed today in our "land of plenty" and "hurry up to sit somewhere else" society.

Don't worry, there is hope; I'm saving the good news for the end.

Know your enemy

All right, we know what drives us to eat in the first place: hunger – obviously a necessary survival mechanism. We also know that now in our "land of plenty", storing or discovering food is NOT the problem. The problem is in knowing how to identify when you've had enough and mitigating that irritating urge to eat when you know you shouldn't.

Additionally, it's quite obvious if you're overweight or have a roll of fat that never goes away, there's no *physical* reason to gain weight (you have plenty of energy stores). Nor would you have a true *internal* "lingering" hunger cue following normal meals. *This leaves only external cues to consume food: your world around you.* Now of course the simple solution is to move to the proverbial deserted island, but since that's not practical for most, we are left with altering our personal landscape. But first let's examine the enemy.

If you go back to our introduction, you'll recognize that *eating control* is most often a mechanism of our environment: whether in social situations or not, one will often drink when not actually thirsty, and eat when not hungry – simply because the food is there or it's something to do.

Everyday examples

- You cruise into Starbucks for 12 oz of fluids when you're not thirsty, but you order a 200-400 calorie beverage instead (e.g. latte or mocha).
- You go out with friends and order drinks (which of course contain calories), not because you're thirsty, but to "hang out" – as long as they're serving, you're drinking (and again not because you're thirsty) and that leads to eating or at least snacking on things that generally go with drinks – even if you don't finish the snacks, you WILL finish that drink.
- You clean your plate, not because you know it's exactly the amount of food you need to power yourself to the next meal without getting fatter – no – you're simply *finishing* the meal no matter what size. Fifty-four percent of adults

claim that they attempt to eat until their “plates are clean”.

- You go to a movie after dinner, and you can't be hungry, but snacks are part of the movie experience.

Scientific Proof

In one of the decade's most important studies related to satiety, researchers discovered that people really do “count calories with their eyes and not their stomachs”. Researchers conducted a test using a “bottomless soup bowl” (self-refilling bowl) with one group and a normal bowl of the same size with another group. Participants using the bottomless bowls consumed 73% more soup than the other group. In other words, without the visual cue, people were misled into thinking they had not eaten as much as they had so they kept eating. Here are a few additional recent

documentations on how the environment affects eating:

- People who eat with others consume 44% more food than when they eat alone – the more people present, the more they consume.
- Women eat 13% more with men than when eating with other women.
- Snack size, variety, visibility and proximity influence consumption
 - At a movie, people eating popcorn from a large bucket consumed 33% more popcorn by the end of the movie than those eating from a medium bucket (even though both groups had previously eaten dinner and the popcorn was 14 days old).
 - When given a variety of choices of the same snack foods (e.g. yogurt, jelly beans, M&M's) people ate up to 70% more calories!
 - People ate Hershey's kisses at a 46% faster rate when in a clear jar versus an opaque one.
 - People ate 5.6 more candies/day when the jar was on their desk versus 2-yards away.

Summarize your enemy and establish a basic battle plan

Other than our waistlines, we are no different from our ancestors when it comes to satiety. Our early predecessors also ate everything around them. The difference was the quantity of available food and that they had to grow it, gather it, prepare it, catch it (or run from it). The work required to stay alive kept people skinny. We can incorporate these three important factors to some degree in today's world: 1) Acquiring food occupied most of the day, not eating it -- i.e. **they stayed busy**; 2) Calories expended offset whatever available calories were consumed – i.e. **calories out automatically cancelled calories in, no matter what or how they ate**; 3) Perception or respect for food – i.e. there was no waste or abuse of food – **availability of food was portion control**.

There is no question that if we had to acquire food as our ancestors did, we would certainly solve society's weight problems, but the innate instinct to not “waste food” prevails, and this is the main reason we're in this situation today. And how ironic or even paradoxical is that? *Paradoxical* because the very trait that led to our survival is now killing us: don't waste food, keep eating it as long as it's there. *Ironic* because we *are* actually wasting food (look at the jiggling storage areas growing on most of the people around you). In cleaning our plates we think we're not wasting food – HEY – wake up! WE DON'T NEED THOSE CALORIES.

Imitate our ancestors

The suggestions below touch on how we can incorporate the three primary aspects of life that kept our predecessors from getting fat. Get more helpful hints using the link in the next section.

1. **Stay busy:** If you're busy moving or participating in an activity, you generally can't eat.
2. **Calories out cancels calories in no matter what we eat:** Learn your calories burned by using bodybugg® & gain control. Then you can eat what you want up to that number – you'll always be in control and 100% free & flexible in choices.
3. **Available food as portion control:** Clean up your environment! Don't make tempting or more food than necessary readily available. If it's not there, you can't eat it.

Manipulate your environment

[Click here](#) for helpful tips on how you can alter your personal environment to help control food intake within proper limits. Print it out and hang it on your refrigerator.

Tips from a bodybuilder

Bodybuilders preparing for competition require the highest level of “food discipline” and employ the greatest number of “dieting tricks” in order to keep from eating while “starving” close to death. Trust me, bodybuilders have forgotten more than anyone will ever know about cheating the system. Here are a few examples:

- Brush your teeth immediately following a meal: it sends a subliminal message that the meal is over.
- Stick sugarless gum in your mouth every time you get an urge to eat or keep eating when you shouldn't.
- Drink a diet soda, coffee or tea when an eating urge occurs, or to end each meal.
- Wait 40 minutes after a meal before you decide to give in to dessert or more food; it takes roughly that long for the satiety message to get from stomach to brain.
- Stay busy: plan an activity almost immediately post-meal where eating would be difficult or impossible. Stay busy between meals.
 - This increases your calories burned rather than your calories consumed, refocuses your attention, and stalls for time until the satiety signal hits.
- Consume foods high in volume and low in calories e.g. BIG salads.
- Use lots of non-caloric sweeteners to satisfy a growing sweet tooth.
- Plan a “cheat” day or meal once a week (but make it up or save up the calories using bodybugg).
- Go to bed early, or save a meal for right before bedtime – you can't eat when you're asleep, but you're more likely to eat more if you go to bed a long time after dinner.
 - Humans are always less hungry in the morning than they are at night.
- Take your time eating – take small bites and use small utensils.
- Snack on pickles or air popped popcorn when you just have to eat.
- When all else fails during temptation, pinch that spot of fat you're trying to lose and think again.
- When the proverbial sweet tooth becomes unbearable (the leaner you get the louder it screams) be sure to reserve the calories you need to satisfy it – but get the most bang for the fewest calories. The perfect sweet is the highest satiating-value-per-calorie formula.

Summary: Satisfy your "fat tooth" without getting fat

I only wish we had desserts/snacks like the Apex Brownie and Fruit Fuel bars when I was dieting – life would have been much more pleasant for everyone around me (no one likes a dieter and the dieter generally stops liking people). Because of the profile of protein, fats and carbohydrates, these, like other Apex foods, can be used for small meals, or you can eat two for an entire meal.

These may be the best additions yet when it comes to healthy, satisfying, low-calorie desserts or small meals – at this point in time, they're definitely the perfect formula.

Well, that's it – you now have what you need to win this battle. Between the information and tools described in last month's newsletter (bodybugg® and display device) and actions discussed here, you simply must succeed. Just do it – you won't regret it. And stop "wasting food" (pun intended). Talk to you next month.