

How to Stop Cravings

If it weren't for cravings dieting would be easy! Feeling compelled to eat what we know we shouldn't be eating and in quantities we know will cause weight gain, frustrates and impedes every dieter. Over and over again we fail to adopt a new healthy eating routine because of cravings for high calorie, high carb, high fat, and high salt foods.

What is a craving?

A craving is simply a thought. It's a feeling. A feeling specifically that you highly desire some form of pleasure. You can have a craving for anything that gives you pleasure like sex, shopping, drinking alcohol, playing golf, watching a movie or checking your e-mail. A craving can only develop from something you have gotten high levels of pleasure from in the past consistently. High calorie, high fat, high carb or salty foods consistently bring high levels of pleasure and comfort so a high level of desire to experience this pleasure and comfort is naturally formed causing a potential craving when you think about these foods.



How do you get a craving?

A trigger or cue in the environment that gets you thinking about the thing that gives you pleasure typically starts a craving. You can trigger a craving to go shopping by seeing your friend's new purse. You can trigger a craving to go golfing by seeing golf on TV. You can trigger a craving to eat by many things! Here are a few:

- See a food commercial on TV
- Drive by a fast food restaurant
- Drive by a store you know has pleasure food (Ice cream at convenience store)
- Smell the smoke from a restaurant grill (restaurants do this on purpose)
- See a sign that says "3 donuts for a \$1"
- Time of day (you crave a bowl of ice cream at 8pm)
- Watching a TV (I crave popcorn when watching a movie, beer when watching football)
- Hear a food or restaurant jingle on the radio

- Taste a cookie you made and now crave more. (you can't just eat one!)

Food cravings are typically triggered from something we see, smell, hear or taste.

The Anatomy of a Craving

By really understanding what a craving is, you can understand exactly how to stop or control your cravings. First, a craving is a natural function of your brain to move you strongly toward pleasure. This is what your brain is designed to do. Move you away from pain and toward pleasure—to move you to a better life—to move you toward success. So don't curse your brain's innate function to automatically motivate you toward pleasure. Just know that your subconscious brain has no capacity to understand the long term outcome of pleasure derived

from reading a book or the pleasure derived from eating a bag of donuts.

A craving is a thought triggered by one of your senses. You see, hear, smell or taste something that then triggers the brain to focus on and then want that pleasure. This trigger is often your internal silent voice that says something to motivate you like:



- "Wow! That tasted so good, I gotta have another."
- "(Seeing store) they have moose tracks ice cream, that would taste so good" "I've had a long day and deserve a treat" or "the kids would like that too" (justification)
- "That smells delicious; I'm going to order the ribs. I'll have my cheat night tonight instead of Friday"
- "It's 8 o'clock, I need a snack"
- "I gotta have some donuts with my coffee in the morning! I'll swing in and just get three"

External stimulus → Internal voices (thoughts) → What you do

See a fast food sign that says "Family meal pack \$15" → your internal voice says: "that would be great and save me time from cooking tonight" "Kids will love it!" "I'll cook tomorrow night" "I won't eat the potatoes" → You pull in and buy the meal pack

Internal voice

If you pay close attention to your internal voice, you will hear first a call to action like: *“I should stop and get ice cream”* and then justifications of that action like: *“I’ve had a rough day.”* Think of this voice as a different person. Your internal voice (this other person) is trying to talk you into stopping for ice cream. Your internal voice though only lives in the present moment and has no understanding of future consequences. You, on the other hand, do have an understanding of what future consequences could occur. If you consciously allow yourself to agree with your internal voice’s justifications, you’ll give in to your craving. If you argue with your internal voice, you may quiet it and thus pass by or even destroy the urge! Becoming aware of your internal voice, and then separating it from you (it’s your brain just doing its job to move you toward pleasure), is the key to gaining control of cravings.

What keeps us from pursuing all pleasures?

If our brains are automatically motivated toward any pleasure, what keeps us from having sex with anyone, driving 100 mph for the thrill of it or maxing out our credit cards to buy whatever we want?

When we believe that an immediate negative (painful) consequence is likely, this belief controls us from pursuing the pleasure. This negative consequence is a personal judgment. For most of us, we refrain from getting pleasure in these ways because of fear of the immediate or certain negative consequence. If the consequence is not immediate or certain, then it becomes very easy for your brain to persuade you into enjoying the pleasure.

To kill a craving, you must create a believable and compelling immediate negative consequence of pursuing the craving. People struggle with their eating urges because it is so easy to allow the brain to focus on the immediate pleasure and lack of immediate consequences.

When it comes to eating, you must create and focus on compelling immediate negative consequences!

Possible Immediate and Compelling Consequences:

1. You must estimate the calories you overate and do that much exercise immediately.
2. You must tell your spouse, friend or trainer what you just ate. (text or phone if not there)
3. You must write a big red “C” on your calendar because Cravings won today!

The consequence must be immediate and compelling to you.

Understanding this principle allows you to formulate a strategy to stop your food cravings just like you stopped other pleasures because you created your own belief of an immediate negative consequence.

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Naming and personifying your internal voices

Naming and personifying your internal voices may seem childish, but it is a very powerful method to increase your awareness of these voices that motivate all feelings and actions—everything you do.

Your internal voice does more than just motivate your food cravings. It motivates you to send a harsh e-mail, yell at your spouse, criticize your child or skip an important project. Your internal voice motivates you to do things in your life you wish you were better at or wish you could change. Your internal voice also motivates you to do good things like help a co-worker or pick up a pop can from the parking lot.

For most people these internal voices go unnoticed because we have been living with them since we learned to talk. We live as if these internal voices are “us” speaking when most of the words you hear is really your brain “speaking” and you believe it is your voice and believe it!

You have two internal voices: One that we can define as “Bad”. This is the voice that talks you into doing negative things like eating leftovers from the refrigerator before bed or publicly criticizing a co-worker.

You also have a voice that we can define as “Good”. The voice that talks you into doing positive things like helping a neighbor, exercising after dinner, or selecting a healthier food at the grocery store.

By naming and personifying your internal voice, you can create a brain pattern that is highly effective at getting yourself to listen to your positive internal voice and getting you to ignore your negative internal voice.

For your internal “good” voice you want to create a picture of the most influential, kind, charismatic, good looking, confident person you have ever met! Somebody in real life you would be highly attracted to.

For your internal “bad” voice, you want to create a picture of the most scummy, ugly, untrusting, fast-talking, jittery character you have ever met! Somebody in real life you could not stand!



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Powerful mental imagery!

By associating a strong mental image of a person to both your “good” and “bad” internal voice, you will exponentially decrease the motivating power of your “bad” voice and increase the motivating power of your “good” voice. Now when you hear your internal voice say, “Let’s stop

and get some ice cream” your brain will concurrently envision this scummy “bad” person and his/her voice tonality will be heard rather than your voice!

The Goal

The goal is to get to a healthy eating routine that includes some eating for pleasure but mostly eating for purpose—a vibrant and healthy life. Cravings will always present themselves—it’s a natural function of our brain. You may think that people who have successfully adopted a healthy eating routine have fewer cravings. **WRONG!** They have the same amount of cravings, but rather than craving buttered bread with their dinner, they crave fresh tomatoes sprayed with olive oil and basil! A craving is a desire for pleasure. **You can choose a new HIGHER STANDARD for pleasure!** This is the goal you are working for—to associate MORE pleasure to eating healthy things and less pleasure to eating unhealthy things. It’s as simple as that. Once you do, you’re set. It becomes automatic.

Changing what brings you pleasure

The taste of high calorie, high fat, high carbohydrate, high salt, and high sugar foods biologically brings us pleasure. Small kids are drawn to love junk food over green beans because of innate biological reasons. But the power of your mind is exponentially greater than your genetic likes and dislikes. For most people, chocolate is to “die for”. But all of us know or have heard of someone who got massively sick on a chocolate ice cream cone as a small child and now 40 years later as an adult they dislike anything chocolate—and these folks are usually thin! Imagine that!

So to overcome physiological pleasure, you have to create psychological displeasure.

This is what people who have successfully adopted a healthy eating routine have done. Their tongues have not become less attracted to chocolate, pancakes, crackers, or cookies, but they have successfully instilled a new association of mental displeasure to these items which greatly reduces the perceived attractiveness their tongue has to these foods. People will say: “Chocolate just doesn’t taste as good anymore.” Or “If I eat pancakes now I feel sick.” The taste of chocolate or pancakes has not change, but the association of pain with that taste has caused the taste to change in the



person's PERCEPTION.

So how do you do this?

Feelings are generated by words. What you say creates how you feel. If you say *"She hates me"* you feel differently than saying *"She challenges me and makes me better"*.

Try this experiment to prove how powerful your words are. Think about your favorite pleasure food. Let's say for example, your favorite pleasure food is peanuts in the shell. When you eat them you can't stop. You usually end up eating 700 or more calories because they are high in fat. You would say to yourself: *"Peanuts are fat bombs! They make my ass fat and people see my fat ass and think I am lazy!"* Now how do you feel about peanuts? Likely a massive decrease in attractiveness! (You must use language that is shocking (gets attention) to your brain)

Nothing more focuses your thinking than do your own words!

Making these words strong and emotionally compelling gives them the strength to overtake the pleasure of what you feel like doing ("I really feel like having a second cookie"). When your words elicit emotions more powerful than the emotions pulling you to do something you know is hurting you, your words are effective. Use STRONG words that get your subconscious' attention!

Keep stacking until it breaks!

If you wanted to kill a large and angry bear running at you and your family, would you shoot it once or fire several shots to be sure it was dead? Sorry for the gruesome example, but it illustrates how you should approach your cravings.

Keep thinking of painful consequences as if you are firing shots at an angry bear! This will overload the pain association to such a degree that the craving MUST die!

So back to the peanut example you would start by saying:

"Peanuts are fat bombs and make my ass fat!" AND "I will not lose weight this week if I eat these!" AND "my daughter will see me eating this and I'll be a poor role model" AND "I'm sick and tired of food controlling me" AND "my self-confidence sucks when I feel fat" AND.....

Get the picture? You are trying to establish a new belief. The more "evidence" you present, the more your brain believes this new belief and will thus abide by it!

Keep STACKING one painful consequence on top of the other and your craving MUST BREAK!

Practice makes it a habit

What stops most people from success isn't understanding what to do, it's doing what they understand! Now that you have a powerful tool to literally destroy the appeal of your internal voice that has caused you to do things you don't want to do, you can just go back to normal or use this tool. But like anything else you've been doing your whole life, implementing this tool will seem "abnormal" and you'll easily go back to hearing your internal voices as your voice and thus be highly motivated to listen to those internal justifications that get you to do things you later regret. When you hear your voice say "I don't need to do that, it's silly", put your scummy person's voice on that internal statement. Repeat it with your best scummy person voice. Practice, practice, practice and soon you'll find yourself driving past a fast food place and reading their special out loud in your scummy person voice: *"yeah, \$5 burger night...how about \$5 fat ass night!"* Then in your powerful person voice: *"Victory is mine, I live by a higher code of LIFE!"*

Practice this voice in other aspects of life. When you feel like lashing out hear your internal "good" voice say: *"I will not be pulled into senselessness, Victory is MINE!"* Feel the power of confidence flow through you when you hear your "good" internal voice.

Other ways to stop a craving



1. **Exercise.** Moving your body in strong ways doesn't associate a negative consequence to eating food, but it empowers your confidence and willpower to consciously refrain from it. It's also hard to eat peanuts while riding bike or walk/jogging down the trail. Intense exercise also physiologically acts as an appetite suppressant. Be sure to push yourself to gain this "I don't feel hungry anymore" benefit from pushing yourself with exercise.



2. **Remove yourself from where food is and do something.** This simple yet powerful method changes your focus from food to what you are doing. Going outside, working in your flower garden, working in the garage, tidying up the basement are all examples. Just get yourself out of any environment with a food association and do something to busy your mind on something else.



3. **Take a shower.** It's really hard to eat peanut butter bars in the shower! The shower also gives you pleasure which is what your brain was actually seeking from craving the peanut butter bars so a hot relaxing shower gives you a double effect!



4. **Brush your Teeth.** You have brushed your teeth thousands of times and then went bed so your brain is STRONGLY conditioned to be cued that it is sleep time after you brush your teeth. Also, the minty taste in your mouth sends a signal to your brain that interferes with any food craving signal. (note: if you brush your teeth before eating breakfast, this tool may not be very effective for you because your brain associates eating after brushing your teeth.)

Difficult times of the day

Evening cravings

For most people, cravings come most frequently after dinner. The 2-3 hours before bed time period. This also happens to be the time that our willpower is the weakest because of our lower level of energy. Your mental willpower coincides with your physical energy level so feeling tired after a long day causes your willpower to be considerably less than earlier in the day. Use the above strategies to get past the challenging 2-3 hours before bed!

Before dinner cravings

The most common craving time is typically the period between leaving work and eating dinner. For most of us, we leave work in a low blood sugar state and therefore our bodies are craving carbs. If you find yourself craving chips, crackers, cereal or other carb snacks as soon as you arrive home, you're not alone! The best way to defeat these cravings is to eat something before you head home. Timing is everything on this though. If you eat 5 minutes before arriving at your kitchen, your body will crave more food. If you eat 30 minutes or so before you arrive home, your blood sugar will be back up and you'll feel satisfied when you walk into your kitchen.

A piece of fruit is fantastically simple. Bring bananas and apples to your work so you always have one available for something to eat 30 minutes prior to arriving at your home! You can also get



creative and create “binge baggies” which are actually to stop binges...but I like the catchy name. Make 100-calorie snacks in baggies. Almonds, raisins, baby carrots, a hard-boiled egg are all examples of healthy things you can put into a baggie, take to work and call it your “binge baggie” that you eat 30 minutes prior to arriving at your home kitchen. Make this fun and see what

kind of healthy 100-calorie “binge baggies” you can create!

SUCCESS ASSIGNMENTS:

1. To build your awareness of how your senses are triggering your cravings ask yourself: *“What just triggered this craving I am experiencing?”* Something I saw, smelled, heard, tasted or some other cue like the time of day or a habit I have? List the causes of your next 10 cravings:

Craving

What caused it?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

2. Now that you have awareness, use your new “Bad Voice” to respond to your internal voice causing your cravings. Place a check by what you did if it worked. If it didn’t, what could you do differently to make it work next time? You can also use your “Good voice” to tell your subconscious what you WANT to do and how good you feel now!

What happened?

It was 8pm on Wednesday and I heard a voice say “time for ice cream”

What I did

With my bad voice I said: *“Yeah, let’s have some delicious Ice cream and get really fat!..yeah!”*
With my good voice I said: *“I now enjoy ice water and a good book! YES!”*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

3. Now that you are using your bad and good internal voices, practice using the other strategies to stack against your cravings. Place a check mark by it if it worked.

What happened?

What other strategies I used

Felt like eating cookies

Brushed my teeth and took a nice hot shower

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

4. To create the successful habit of eating 30 minutes before arriving at your home kitchen to increase your blood sugar level and fend off difficult cravings, create a plan of bringing food to eat either at work or in your car 30 minutes prior to arriving home.

I will bring the following food to work: (example: bananas or apples)

What kind of “binge baggies” have you made? List what’s in them to have a comparison.

| | <u>Serv. size</u> | <u>Calories</u> | <u>protein/carbs/fat/sodium</u> |
|----|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| 4. | | | |
| 5. | | | |
| 6. | | | |
| 7. | | | |

Rotate them weekly for variety. Have fun researching “healthiest foods on the planet” and then implementing them into your “binge baggies”

5. What strategies are you using to keep from eating 2-3 hour before bed?

Strategy 1:

Strategy 2:

Strategy 3:

Strategy 4: