



## Eating Out of Anger, Worry, and Cravings

*Dr. Charles Shaffer*

Individuals who are overweight or obese constitute a severe risk to psychological thinking and behavior as well as physical well-being. The World Health Organization estimates that 2.8 million people die each year due to the adverse consequences of being overweight or obese. Ultimately, obesity causes a significant lasting imbalance of energy intake and energy expenditures. The imbalance is mainly caused by excessive food intake or eating the wrong foods for your metabolic rate. Living in this type of environment poses a serious challenge for maintaining a healthy weight in most individuals.

However, the majority of individuals with a healthy weight suggests not everyone is equally susceptible to temptations of this obesogenic environment.

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What exactly explains the apparent individual differences of the susceptibility of wanting food groups, though? One hypothesis from the WHO and the University of the Netherlands is certainly plausible: people find high-energy foods more attractive, which in turn increases the hedonic hunger that leads to craving and essentially overeating, thereby contributing to weight gain and obesity.

Attention bias for food could be one crucial cognitive process in this respect.

Food is essential for survival, including high-energy foods. These food cues are potent in capturing our attention. There is a growing body of research and evidence that obese individuals take specific cues from television, movies, and restaurants. According to addiction theories, attention bias or substance-related signals were a significant force in drug-seeking and drug-taking behavior.

According to the sensitization model by the University of Netherlands, addictive drug consumption gains incentive properties during the conditioning process of repeated signaling and subsequent drug consumption.

The process becomes crucial in grabbing the attention of a user. This model may explain overeating in the context of obesity through conditioning processes such as rewarding adequate food. Living in an environment surrounded by multiple places to eat essentially bombards the brain with the simple question “what will we eat?”. Many people are able to maintain a healthy weight and healthy lifestyle, indicating that such food environments do not tempt everyone. The attention bias for food could be considered as a cognitive factor that contributes to overeating. Additionally, attention bias for diet has been implicated in eating disorder symptomatology.

Many patients satisfy their anxiety and worry through eating. The food groups they most commonly turn to are high carbohydrates and high sugary foods. Trying to control this part of their addiction can prove difficult for many. Psychologists who specialize in addiction found that patients who eat as such do in fact suffer from the same pool of addiction as those with alcohol and drug dependencies.

So, the next time you become tempted to eat things you should not, ask yourself WHY. You can make yourself accountable by placing 3x5 cards in your cabinet, on your refrigerator, or other places with the question “what are you looking for?”. Learning to be accountable is extremely important. There are many different mechanisms that are able to help you, please utilize them.

As we migrate back to restaurants and social gatherings, make yourself accountable. Accountability is one of the most important attributes that can be established. We are praying for each of you as we go through this challenging time.

Blessings,  
Chuck Shaffer MD

# The Recipe of the Month

## *Artichoke Dip*

*\*Makes 12 servings*

### *Ingredients*

- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp heavy whipping cream
- 1/4 C water
- 1/4 tsp salt and pepper each
- 1/6 tsp nutmeg
- pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1 C 2% shredded Swiss cheese
- 4 ounces 2% cream cheese (cut up)
- 2 cans (14 ounces each) artichoke hearts, drained
- 1/2 pkg frozen chopped spinach, thawed and rung dry
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1/4 C parmesan cheese



**Creamy,  
Smooth, Yum.**

### *Directions*

Heat oven to 350 and coat a shallow 1.5 qt baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Melt butter in a medium sauce pan over medium heat. Next, whisk in heavy cream, salt, pepper, nutmeg, and cayenne. Add water as needed for desired consistency. Bring to a simmer; cook simmering for 3 minutes. Remove from heat and whisk in Swiss cheese and cream cheese until smooth.

Combine artichoke hearts, spinach, and garlic in a food processor or blender and chop until blended. Fold into cheese sauce and pour into prepared dish. Spread smooth and top with grated parmesan. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes, or until bubbly around edges. Serve warm with grilled chicken on tooth picks for dipping and raw veggies. Each serving provides 1 ounce of protein.