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## Busyness - The Cause of Many Regrets

*Dr. Charles Shaffer*

There are a few phrases I hear on a day-to-day basis: “I’m just too busy” and “you wouldn’t believe all that is going on with me this week”. These are a few of the reasons people seem to fall victim to not following the program and eating the wrong things. Did you ever realize that being busy about things that are not truly important is straining your ability to be successful in other areas of your life?

A caption for busy should be, ‘Being Under Satan’s Yoke’. Did you know you have a yoke tied around your neck? In biblical times, a yoke was used to restrain animals and make them go in the direction they were supposed to. At the Weigh Station, we encounter yokes of bondage to a host of different items. Some individuals have a yoke of sugar, carbohydrates, alcohol, and overeating.

WHAT YOU’LL FIND  
INSIDE:

- **BUSYNESS - THE CAUSE OF MANY REGRETS**
- **RETRAIN YOUR BRAIN FOR THE HOLIDAYS**
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All of these items need to be broken in order to be successful. In the book *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, the authors John Cacioppo and William Patrick conducted a new study that involved people being lonely and a plate of cookies. Through controlled experiments they discovered that individuals who were set up to experience social rejection ate twice as many cookies as people who were told that everybody wanted to be friends with them. Part of the double cookie eater's motivation was comfort. The fatty, sugary foods activate the pleasure center of our brain in the dopamine area. So, when you're lonely, you're physiologically less inclined to "do the right thing", whether with food or with other external and internal choices.

Isn't it fascinating we push others away from our relationships where we could be held accountable? Therein lies Satan's most significant power to distract us from what we should be doing. We become swamped. Many patients who come to the Weigh Station feel trapped by their eating habits and weight problems and handle their struggles in an isolated fashion. Some individuals, especially women, become socially disconnected.

Are you eating because of your feelings or because you are hungry? How are you feeling right now? Words such as 'stressed' and 'too busy' are circumstances, not feelings. Are you sad, angry, hurt, guilty, ashamed, or lonely? These are the most common emotions for overeating and choosing the wrong foods. Food and feelings are intertwined, which is why emotional eating is one of the biggest problems we see. Sometimes the sugars and carbohydrates are the addictions of your life.

It is essential to be aware of the root reason as to why you are reaching for that particular food. Are you eating because you're trying to comfort your sadness or are you eating because you cannot say 'no' to yourself? Do you believe food is necessary to celebrate every occasion? Are you guilty over what you've been eating or are ashamed about losing control, leading you to eat more? If you tend to be an emotional eater, then negative feelings will always follow with something to eat. One of the many reasons patients eat a lot of things is because they want to feel comforted.

So, when you become too busy to take care of yourself, you are causing your problems to exacerbate your weight. Remember, we are here to help you overcome your addictions to food groups. We give you all kinds of tools and recipes to help you with your struggles. If you need help, just ask.

As we look forward to the new holiday season remember it is about spending time with family and friends. We wish you a happy holiday season! If you are struggling to find recipes for Thanksgiving, the menu is on our website and at the check-out window in our offices!

Happy Thanksgiving and Blessings to All,

Chuck Shaffer MD

# Retrain Your Brain for the Holidays

*Tricia Foley, MS, RDN, CLT*

It's November, which means the holidays are upon us. With all the progress you've made this year toward your weight loss goals, the last thing you want is for the holiday season to derail you. Sometimes sweets just seem to call your name, this isn't your imagination- it's how we're all wired!

It turns out that our brains are preloaded with certain "rules" for behavior...These are known as "SuperNormal Stimuli". They're there to help us survive much like animals do in the wild. Take for example the greylag goose, a ground nesting bird. Occasionally as the mom moves around the nest, one of the eggs will roll out into the grass. When this happens, the mom will go over and use its beak to push the egg back to the nest. Upon witnessing this, a researcher decided to test the goose. He wondered if the goose would go after just any white, round object. What he discovered was that the goose would do just that! In fact he tested the goose with several round objects including a billiard ball, light bulb and even a volleyball. What was more interesting was that the bigger the white object, the more important it was for the mom to get it back to the nest. The mom knew that the egg's survival depended on her actions!

We as humans aren't much different, we are wired for survival. How many of you have been at the store and had a thought similar to: "Those oreo cookies looked SOOO good, I had to have them"! You can thank your primal brain for that one! Sugar, Fat and Salt light up the reward center in our brain. Our primal brains know survival and sugar (not salad) equal energy! Therefore similar to the goose we seek these things out.

Interestingly even the anticipation of the cookie (or something sweet) stimulates dopamine. It's the expectation of a rewarding experience that motivates us to take action. We are wired to love this stuff and this is especially true during the holidays when cakes and cookies are constantly on display.

So what can we do to override this primal cue? One tool that has helped others in overriding this temptation is reminding yourself that the anticipation may be better than the actual experience. For example, I remember being nine and my Mom telling me our family would be taking a trip to Disney. I was SOOO excited, but when we got there it was hot, crowded and the lines were a mile long. The anticipation in my mind was much better than the actual experience.

That cookie you crave will be the same- it probably isn't going to be as good as it looks, but putting in the cart sure does feel exciting in the moment! Making a decision ahead of time not to buy the cookie uses our decision center of the brain instead of our impulse center. Going to the store? Make the decision ahead of time that you won't buy anything that isn't on your list (and don't include cookies) if you haven't made that decision and act in the moment, willpower will fail you every time. This is a skill and takes practice, the more you stick to it, the easier it will be.

Another tactic people use is to shop the perimeter- cookies then become out of sight out of mind OR you can avoid the store altogether and use something like Click List where the groceries are bagged for you, then you won't be tempted by the cookies because you won't see them.

Another helpful tool in getting off autopilot-is start to ask yourself questions about what's going in your cart, be curious as to whether that purchase is going to move you closer or farther from your goal. If the answer is farther, keep walking!

### **What are some other tools you can do to keep healthy foods at home and avoid impulse buys?**

- Stick to your list
- Use a grocery pick up service, like Kroger Click list
- Shop Perimeter of store.

Now, I know what you're thinking...what if I HAVE to buy it for guests. I have a tip for this too. Once you get home, think about how you can set up your environment. Often I have clients who comment that they could eat better if they didn't have picky kids...(Can anyone relate?) Setting up your environment in a way where more nutritious things are at an arm's reach can really help! Make chips and candy harder to get to like the cabinet above the fridge. Don't underestimate the power of out of sight out of mind. Put snack foods where kids can't reach and nutritious foods where they can! Set a bowl of fruit on the table and have pickles, string cheese and veggies to snack on in the fridge. Chances are everyone will eat this first. IF the kids still want the junk food, portion it out for them and then quickly put it away- out of sight out of mind.

Use your skill power instead of willpower this holiday season to enjoy the festivities without forgoing your wellness goals!

# The Recipe of the Month

## *Asparagus and Crab Soup*

6 servings

- 4 C chicken broth
- 1/2 packet Truvia
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 6 shallots, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/2 lb lump crab meat
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 15 oz canned white asparagus spears cut into 1" sections; reserve liquid
- 1 tbsp coriander
- 1 scallion, thinly sliced

### *Directions*

If white asparagus is unavailable, use frozen or fresh asparagus (in this case, add the fresh asparagus to the broth from the very beginning and cook until tender, before adding the remaining ingredients). Combine the broth, Truvia, and salt in a 3-quart soup pot. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a skillet. Add the shallots and garlic and stir-fry. Add the crab meat and black pepper to taste. Stir fry over high heat for 1 minute. Set aside. Bring the soup to a boil. While the soup is actively boiling, add the egg and stir gently. Continue to stir for about 1 minute. Add the crab meat mixture and asparagus with its canning liquid; cook gently until heated through. Transfer the soup to a serving bowl. Sprinkle on the coriander, scallion, and freshly ground black pepper.

**Let's Get  
Cooking!**

