

THE PASTA IS CALLING ME

Food Addictions Are Alive And Well

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"I'm here! I'm here!" shouted the pasta. The addict happily responded "I know! I know! I'm coming! I'm coming!" Wait, I called the obese person 'an addict' by mistakemaybe it wasn't a mistake. I find it very difficult to recall any one of my weight clients in the past 25 years who was overweight 20+ pounds as not being an addict to one food or another. The words which comprise the 'pasta title' of this article were uttered to me by a client in our initial interview and rang so true as learned in my experiences with so many other clients. Recently, there has been a flood of TV revelations that some foods are addictive and that many people are addicted to them. It sure takes time for the media to open its eyes when it comes to addictions. This news is old hat as a few scientists and doctors have been proclaiming the addiction aspect of foods for over 20 years. I first started to take notice of food addictions when I was conducting extensive research on the addictions of drugs, alcohol and compulsive gambling. I read any and all research of Dr. Nora Volkow in the 90's, then of the Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York, now as Director of the National Institute of Drugs and Alcohol (NIDA). I ran across an article in 2002 in which she was explaining the effects of various substances on the brain including food. Like people addicted to drugs, obese people have fewer receptors for dopamine, which is the 'feel-good' brain chemical associated with reward and pleasure. Various tests showed that the brain's responses for food were similar to its responses for drugs. A 2nd study a few days later revealed that compared with normal-weight subjects, obese subjects had significantly higher metabolic activity in the brain regions that are responsible for sensation in the lips, tongue and mouth. This could mean that obese people are more sensitive to the rewarding properties of food, and may be one of the reasons that they overeat.

I have always looked for the addictive food substances when working with weight clients for it is my belief that obese people are all addicted to their own 'drug of choice'. And yes, overeating is also addictive. I learned a long time ago when working with compulsive gamblers that behaviors are also addictive and ceasing the behavior can cause withdrawals. You may believe this or not, as I shall not take up space in this article to defend my theories that I incorporated in my HypnoAddictionology Practice Manual way back in 1991. When I work with drug, alcohol or compulsive gambling addicts, I set the record straight right away by calling them addicts to their faces and in front of any support persons that they bring with them for their initial interview. Overweight clients do not mind me using terms that really are not endearing but these terms such as 'addict', 'fat' or 'heavy' or 'large' dictate the seriousness in which we shall be conducting our sessions. I have found that so many obese people have been enabled and coddled in some form or the other, and to do the same in my office would be disastrous. Some have seemingly valid reasons for their improper eating, and this must be taken into consideration. I approach shedding pounds and weight management with the same ferocity as I do drugs, alcohol, compulsive gambling and other addictions, for addictions affect our lives detrimentally to a great extent. It is truly believed that clients want to put any niceties aside and get into the program as they are 'sick and tired

of being sick and tired' especially with dieting and the requirement of exercise which I also think is not necessary as I shall explain later.

Three out of four Americans are projected to be overweight or obese within 10 years. 45 million people diet each year. We hypnotists have a common saying when clients tell us how many diets that they have tried and failed: "Diets don't work!" Then why in the heck do 45 million people a year try diets? The answer to me is really simple: Because they are addicts and dieting is the same as telling a drug addict or alcoholic that they should cut down on drinking or drugging. It doesn't work. The addiction must be attacked with a lengthy confidential interview for background, family history, the educational aspect of the hypnosis experience, our specialized techniques for elimination of urges, cravings, needs and desires, exposure of causes, desensitization, separation from substance or behavior, and for a return of self-confidence, self-esteem, relapse avoidance, along with affirmations, homework, etc. Most clients have self-esteem issues otherwise they would probably not be in your office to begin with....even if they do not recognize this. If you attempt to work with weight clients for only one or 2 sessions please do not take their money as it took time for the client to develop the addiction and we cannot pull a 'puff the magic dragon' cure for slenderizing. "If certain foods are addictive, this may partially explain the difficulty people experience in achieving sustainable weight loss," Ashley Gearhardt of Yale University. "New discoveries in science prove that industrially processed, sugar, fat, and salt-laden food is biologically addictive." Living News. Chocolate tastes so good, as do milkshakes, as do fatty stuffs and these substances go right to the reward circuits in our brains much the same as drugs and alcohol. A very famous TV actor once said that his mother's food tasted so good because she cooked with lard! And we hypnotists know that an image or 'feel good' feeling goes deep into our subconscious minds, the repository for everything that we have witnessed since birth, which sends them back to us over and over again to activate cravings, urges, needs and desires for certain foods, certain amounts, and at certain times. These cravings and actions are more than habits. They have risen to the level of addictions. There is great research with MRI's that I have read over the years which demonstrated that addicts' brains are stimulated so easily by sights of persons pursuing a particular addiction. It is my opinion that this research still does not go far enough as it is my belief that an addict needs no outside stimulation for cravings to emerge and become activated. He or she has everything that they need inside their subconscious minds to activate the cravings. It's as if we have built-in 'triggers' that fire off the images much the same as how dreams develop and come into existence. They just happen but happen more often when there are outside 'triggers' or stimuli to activate the cravings.

30 years ago or so, comedian Bert Lahr bit into a Lay's potato chip in a TV commercial, and while biting, said, "I bet you can't eat just one!" This commercial was famous throughout the USA, and so many people smilingly and jokingly repeated the words while eating potato chips regardless of the brand. It was almost like the commercials give permission to eat the whole bag. Sly, huh? Do you expect anything less from food companies that rake in billions of dollars with their garbage? Smoke only one cigarette, sure! All addictions are the same, they only wear different dresses. This about sums up the snacking, junk-fooding, carbing, late-night, or overeating process. Food addicts see and taste something they like or love and they do not stop until they

have finished all or most of what is there. If you do not like the word 'addict' just substitute the word 'obese'. Once addicts start, there is no stopping. Did you ever hear of a drug addict stopping with one snort of cocaine when there was an ounce available, or an alcohol stop with one drink when there was a bottle available. Do you think that someone just made up this saying without knowing what he was talking about: "One drink is too many, and 1,000 not enough?"

The pasta addict is such a nice lady. She also is addicted to brown rice, an excessive amount of vegetables, and salt. She set a target weight loss of 15 lbs in 8 weeks. Reasonable goals must be set so that the client is not placed in a win/lose or lose/lose situation. Discuss the goals with the client, observe the body structure, the amount of overweight, and the way that the weight is carried, and then agree on the target weight so that the client is placed in a win/win situation. You are doing this for the client, not for yourself, as the client's initial success begets future success when on their own. We had to address each addictive food substance and work with them individually. She cooked for herself and would cook about 1/2 box of pasta almost every night, plus a pot of brown rice and pot of vegetables. It's really difficult for people who are alone, not by choice, and all things like this must be taken into consideration. We are not working with a client, we are working with a human being who has needs the same as we do, same shortcomings, similar issues, etc. We work with the whole being....diets work with the body and that's where they go wrong. Sorry diets, you fail; you lose, and not weight. The first week she dined out one night and had 1/2 portion of pasta. Seven weeks later, she had not eaten any pasta whatsoever, nor brown rice and only eaten a reasonable amount of vegetables. She cut down on salt by not adding after cooking and has done well with that. Her big word after the afore-mentioned techniques was "effortless". This word 'effortless' or 'without-effort' seems to be a slogan with our clients as I hear it repeated by most of them, without prompting. The effortless aspect is programmed into their subconscious minds not through our telling them that it is effortless, but by elimination of the urges, cravings, needs and desires to eat the wrong foods, snack in between meals, overeat, or eat late at night whether they have had dinner or not. This elimination makes it easy along with healing the injured feelings and emotions of the past. There are many interesting stories in our files and very nice weight losses but this article length has its limitations. However, I do want to warn you about soft and sugary drinks including soda and juices. Some people think that if they give up foods that are not good for them, and limit their portions, give up snacking, etc. that they will lose weight. But, this is not true. I had one particular client who lost a couple of inches but no ounces to speak of. She was a little thinner in the face (where most people initially show their weight loss) but no great shakes. She then came out with something that she had not revealed in the lengthy interview. She was addicted to Mountain Dew since she was 3 years old and she is now 24. She had been drinking 40 ounces of Mountain Dew for as long as she can remember. That's all she had to tell me. One can of regular soda per day for one year will put on 15 lbs. One regular can of soda contains an equivalent of 13 packets of sugar. Would you put 13 packets of sugar in water and then drink it? We did the craving elimination for Mountain Dew and the next week, no Mountain Dew, but no weight loss, but she revealed that she was now drinking glasses and glasses of orange juice, which is just as sugary and just as bad for weight gain. In 7 weeks she had 2 glasses of soda (not Mountain Dew)

because there was no water around or some other kind of denial excuse, because that is what addicts do. However she lost 12 lbs in 8 weeks even with the soda and juice set-backs. She reiterated that she has no cravings for the soda or juice and that it was easy as she was not thinking about them any longer.

Oh yes, I promised that I would tell you why I do not stress exercise as being necessary for my clients loss. Sure, exercise is always good for health reasons if the client is physically able to do it but smaller portions is the key and avoidance of crummy eating habits/addictions. One morning I was lying in bed and thinking about my overweight clients and the fact that I do not ask them to exercise. It was like I knew why I did not require my clients to exercise, but I did not really know why, just that I personally thought it was not necessary. The light of an idea turned on that morning and I ran to the computer and googled some exercise statistics to back up my gut-feeling about exercise which I knew were somewhere in the Universe. Well, I was not shocked because I found that only 6% of adult Americans exercised for 30 minutes or more several times a week. I have always focused on the other 94% of obese America because just looking at how large the clients were negated exercise in my mind. 94% of Americans either do not like exercise or do not have the time nor inclination to do it. This dictates that weight programs should be based upon eating and not exercise. Eating properly with psychological acceptance and emotional well-being. What a marriage! Or triumvirate! However you care to look at it.

CAVEAT: In strict compliance with the Ethics & Standards of our profession, always advise your clients who demonstrate symptoms of medical issues or psychological disorders to avail themselves of the best allopathic medical and psychological professional services that they can obtain. Request a written referral when warranted. Hypnotism is complementary to these traditional disciplines.