



PYT Weekly Training & Support

Lesson #71 De-constructing Cravings

by Jim Katsoulis

So, we don't want to rely solely on willpower to stop eating certain foods. What I want to share with you today is kind of a combination of techniques that you can use as well to move past cravings and to change them.

In a way, I like to call this “de-constructing cravings.” What is it about certain foods that make us want them?

Well, a big part of it is the perception we have of it. And what I mean is that we don't think of each individual ingredient in a certain food; we think of the overall perception of that food.

Everything is like this. Pizza becomes something more than just cheese, tomato, bread, and all the things that went into making each of those ingredients. It becomes this one singular experience, and it's usually a taste, a flavor that we think about.

So, one way to deal with this and kind of change it up ... again, what we want to do is not just fight against the perception that we have using willpower and try to stop ourselves. We want to de-construct the perceptions we have and change them because if we can do that on a core level, we're going to simultaneously change our cravings.

And so, what I've decided to do today to use as an example is Ben and Jerry's ice cream, a common one. Again, I want to be clear. I didn't pick something like candy or something that's excessively bad as far as preservatives and something that's got a lot of gross stuff in it because I didn't want to be ridiculous. So, I want to pick something which, I think, is genuinely a good product. It's made well. It's made with good ingredients.

So, I picked something that's not going to have blatantly disgusting stuff in it, but I want to show how to this because, a lot of times, when people think of ice cream, they think of maybe as that spoon reaching into their mouth and then the ice cream dissolving on their tongue.

So, what we want to do is change the perception a bit, and another way we can do this is to look at the ingredients. Now, if I look at the ingredients here, like I said, they're not necessarily that bad, but let's see if anything sticks out to you.

What ingredients does ice cream has the most? The first thing is cream, skimmed milk, liquid sugar, water, egg yolks, Fairtrade-certified vanilla extract, sugar, guar gum, and carrageenan. Now, this is just basic vanilla ice cream. I didn't get one of their crazy flavors. This is just something basic.

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And as you go through that, what you want to do here is de-constructing it so that you're not just thinking about ice cream as this one pleasurable thing; we want to break it down and, sometimes, this can be helpful for your brain to kind of just eliminate the cravings for it a bit. You begin to think of it a little differently.

So, what is it for you? I can tell you that for me, the thing that stuck out with me the first time I read this, years ago, was liquid sugar. That just always stuck with me. And what ended up happening is every time I thought of Ben and Jerry's, I thought of liquid sugar. So, that was the first part of it.

What is it for you? Do any of these ingredients stick out to you as being something that doesn't sound that good to eat? Again, they're cream, skimmed milk, liquid sugar, water, egg yolks, Fairtrade-certified vanilla extract, sugar, guar gum, and carrageenan.

I don't even know what carrageenan is, but it's probably not too bad. Guar gum, like it or don't like it, there's a little extra sugar in there in addition to the liquid sugar which is the third ingredient. Egg yolks, I don't know – good or bad. I eat eggs but, again, when I think of ice cream, I think of eggs and ice cream. It just changes the way I think about it a little bit.

This may or may not be something that works for you. It may bother you or it may not. But if you do this, this is just one more thing you can do with foods that you're struggling with. Break down the ingredients. Find out what they are.

This one is kind of easy, in a sense, because you know all these ingredients; they're pretty basic. You start getting into candies and more heavily-processed foods and you start seeing ingredients and you can't even pronounce the words.

Now, when that happens, that can change your perception of what you're consuming because what we're looking to do here is get past the marketing and to get past our own internal perceptions of what this food is. Again, a lot of times, not this necessarily, but a lot of processed foods, when you start reading the ingredients, you almost start to get the feeling that it's almost not even food. There are a lot of chemicals and a lot of things you can't pronounce; and, again, it just allows you to think about it different and when you think of things differently, you feel differently about them.

And that's what we're, ultimately, looking to do here. It's to change the feelings we have for these foods that you may have been struggling with.

So, the first part is to identify the ingredients, to de-construct it a bit. The second thing is to be present with the food. So, you could eat this ice cream, and you could take a bite of it, and notice how it tastes.

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Notice if you can taste the egg yolk; notice if you can taste the liquid sugar; notice if you can the guar gum. What do you think that is? What do you think it tastes like?

So, as you're eating this and you're identifying those flavors, ideally, you want to pick the thing that kind of bugs you the most. Again, like I said, for me, liquid sugar just bothers me. I don't like sugar, in general, not just the flavor of it but because of what it does to my body.

So, in my mind, when I was eating this ice cream, I was imagining liquid sugar. Again, I'm doing this because this is something I want to have more control over. That's what you want to do. You want to pick foods that you would like to have more control over and less cravings for.

This is the way to do it: Break down the ingredients; and then, as you're eating it, think about the ingredients that bothers you the most. See if you can taste it. That's how you re-perceive these foods and end up having more control over it.

I hope that makes sense.

Finally, what we want to do and we've gone over these before is to eat like a gourmet so that when you eat it, you're really taking a little bit of time to really taste it. Notice the texture; notice the smell; notice the flavors.

Then, you want to go even deeper into it. As you're eating it, the first spoonful, how does that feel? The second spoonful – is the flavor as enjoyable? Because, oftentimes, the first few bites are most enjoyable and then the taste starts to saturate so you don't notice it as much anymore. Pay attention to that.

This isn't about all or nothing; it's about having control. So, we don't have to never eat ice cream again. We just wanna be able to eat it responsibly in a way that's going to give us the body we want.

So, I hope this helps you out. I promise you if you do this in the way that I described, I guarantee you that it's going to make some differences in the way you perceive it; and you never know what they're going to be, so it's something you really have to do in order to understand what it's like.

But if you do it, I can almost guarantee you that something is going to shift in you. You're going to think about it a little differently, and that's what we want to happen.

So, play with this. Do it today. Grab something, some food that you always eat and go look up the ingredients. If you don't know what the ingredients are, if there are some really long preservative names, look it up; google it. Find out what that is; find out what it does. Imagine what it does in your body ingesting it.

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This is what you want to think. This allows us to move past the marketing, past our perceptions and into reality. And that alone is going to change your desire for these foods.

So, have a great week and I'll talk to you next week.

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