



7 REASONS YOU HAVE CRAVINGS, AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

Welcome to the **Healthy Habits Handbook: How to Conquer Your Cravings** – your ultimate guide to understanding, overcoming, and transforming your relationship with cravings for a healthier, happier you!

Hi there,

Before we dive into this guide, I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for downloading this exclusive resource, and say that I really hope you get some valuable take-aways from it. Navigating cravings can be downright frustrating, but on the path to achieving your health and fitness goals, mastering them is a total game-changer. This resource is a curated collection of information and tools aimed at empowering you with practical strategies and insights. It's designed to help you successfully navigate cravings and, at the same time, improve your relationship with food.

Here is what you can expect from this guide:

🍏 **Insights into Your Cravings:** We'll delve into **7 common reasons you may experience cravings**, helping you understand why they occur and how to decode the messages your body is sending.

🥑 **Practical Solutions:** Discover actionable tips and strategies to conquer cravings, from mindful eating techniques to crafting a balanced and satisfying diet.



"Enjoy reading and implementing these tips into your life. If you find anything particularly useful, please share (I would love to know!), and if you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out.

Oh, and, there is a little bonus resource at the end :-)

xo Johanna



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HOW MANY RICE CAKES DOES IT TAKE TO SATISFY THE CRAVING FOR CHOCOLATE?

It takes 5 rice cakes...
.....7 baby carrots, one orange, one container of low fat yoghurt. And a snickers bar.

Let me start by asking you this...

How many times have you tried to satisfy a craving with something else than what you're actually craving - just to eventually end up giving in to it anyway? I know I have a million times 🙋🏻 If you're craving chocolate, a rice cake with sugar free jam or something else "more diet friendly", most likely won't satisfy your urge for chocolate. You'll keep on chasing the satisfaction with more "diet food" and in the end you've eaten ten times more than you would've had you just had the chocolate in the first place 🙄 This phenomenon is called **chasing your phantom food** - trying to satisfy the craving by denying yourself the food you actually want to eat.



While its definitely worth looking into why you have cravings (especially if you have them often) there's one thing I've learned across the years and that is that **sometimes** it's just better to have the real deal immediately. Because the truth is, that when you **truly** allow yourself to have what you really want, you'll notice that you'll be satisfied with less. There is no need to eat the whole chocolate bar in one go. This is applicable not only to your cravings but to your diet in general. The more satisfied you are when eating, the less you'll think about food when you're not hungry. You'll also find it easier to recognize and listen to your body's fullness and you'll be able to stop eating when you've had enough. While if you're unsatisfied, you're likely to eat more despite your level of fullness.



The key to being able to have a piece of chocolate without finishing the whole bar, is allowing yourself **unconditional permission to eat** .

Unconditional permission to eat is a concept I work on with majority of my clients. Unconditional permission to eat is about giving yourself the freedom to enjoy any food **without guilt**. It eliminates the idea of "good" or "bad" foods, **reduces cravings** and promotes a healthier relationship with eating based on satisfaction and nourishment. This approach supports a balanced and sustainable way of eating, minimizing the likelihood of restrictive behaviors that often lead to cravings and emotional distress related to food choices.

- ✓ The next time you're craving something but feel the urge to deny yourself the craving - Practice by allowing yourself to have what you truly want, **eat it mindfully** and enjoy every bite without judgement and without compensating for it later. The goal is to build trust in yourself around food and create a mindset of abundance rather than scarcity and to view food through a neutral lense. **There are no good or bad foods and nothing is off limits.**

Learning to include satisfaction in your diet will help you find an intuitive balance and moderation with eating because as I always say: with permission comes choice 🤔

AND WITH THAT OUT OF THE WAY... 😊

Let's get in to the 7 reasons as to why you might have cravings, and what you can do about it. We might not always simply want to 'give in' .

While we all experience cravings every now and then, if we have cravings often and we find that it negatively impacts our health and eating patterns it is definitely worth exploring the underlying reason.

Start by taking inventory of your current eating habits and patterns, as well as the type of foods you eat, by **asking yourself the following 7 questions.**

Exploring these seven aspects of your eating , will help you implement some changes that hopefully, will help **get your cravings under control.** Oh and, there's a bonus at the end :-)





01

AM I EATING TOO LITTLE?

Perhaps you are experiencing cravings due to eating too little food. When your body isn't receiving enough calories or nutrients, it may signal cravings as a way to encourage a higher intake. You experience cravings, but **you are in fact hungry** and in need of (more) food..

Whats the solution? It is crucial to evaluate whether your calorie target is appropriate for your activity level and overall health. Is it too low and would you benefit from eating more? If you are on restricted calorie budget, you might want to look into the concept of **volume food**.



Volume foods refer to those that have a low calorie density while providing a significant physical volume or bulk. These foods are often rich in water, fiber, or both, which can contribute to a sense of fullness and satisfaction without a high calorie count. Examples of volume foods are fruit and vegetables, and lean proteins. Whole grains like quinoa, brown rice, and oats also provide fiber and nutrients, adding bulk to meals.

WHAT TYPE OF FOOD AM I EATING?

02

The types of food you are eating matters a lot. Ask yourself whether or not you are currently eating mostly wholefoods, or less nutritious food? Are you cooking most meals at home or quickly grabbing something on the go from the convenience store? Are you eating enough protein and fats? Protein and fats are both very satiating (filling). Are you focusing on slower digesting carbs and fiber to keep you full?

Whats the solution?

1. **Focus on Whole Foods** and include a variety of colourful fruits and vegetables to ensure a diverse range of nutrients in your diet.
2. **Balance Macronutrients:** Incorporate a balance of carbohydrates, proteins, and healthy fats for a well-rounded and satisfying diet.
3. **Work on your cooking skills**, and try to cook more at home.





03

WHEN DO I EXPERIENCE CRAVINGS?

Understanding **when** cravings typically occur is crucial for managing them effectively. Skipping lunch which results in afternoon cravings? Do you allow too many hours in between meals?

By paying attention to when you typically experience cravings, especially in relation to meal timing, you can develop strategies to support a more balanced and satisfying eating routine.

Whats the solution?

1. **Eat regular meals across the day:** This will help you maintain stable blood sugar and keep hunger in check, reducing the likelihood of intense cravings.
2. **Eat balanced Meals:** Include a combination of carbohydrates, proteins, and healthy fats in your meals to provide sustained energy and promote satiety.
3. **Healthy Snacking:** If there's a longer gap between meals, incorporate healthy snacks to keep energy levels stable and prevent excessive hunger.



04

IS MY DIET TOO RESTRICTIVE?

A diet that is too restrictive involves limiting or completely cutting out certain food groups or severely cutting calorie intake, which can have significant implications for overall well-being. It can also look like being too strict during the week just to **'let loose'** on the weekend. A highly restrictive diet may lead to nutrient deficiencies, prompting the body to crave specific foods rich in the lacking nutrients.

And not to forget, **when certain foods are deemed "off-limits," the psychological impact of deprivation can intensify cravings for those specific items**

Having flexibility in your diet and relaxing on your "diet commitments" every now and then, you'll actually feel more motivated to continue to eat healthfully! Stop seeing it as falling off the plan and start making it a part of your plan!



Whats the solution to a too restrictive diet? *Incorporating more flexibility in your diet and working on your relationship to food is key,. This can be extremely difficult to achieve on your own, but it is not impossible. It may take time, so be patient and persistent in building a healthier relationship with food - and ask for support if you need to.*

That said, here are some practical tips:



Ditch the All-or-Nothing

Mentality: Avoid labelling foods as "good" or "bad." Allowing yourself to enjoy a variety of foods can help reduce the feeling of deprivation.



Learn and Understand Nutrition:

Educate yourself about nutrition to make informed choices. Understanding the nutritional value of foods can empower you to make choices that align with your health goals.



Challenge Negative Thoughts:

Challenge and reframe negative thoughts about certain foods or your body. Cultivate a positive and compassionate mindset.



Cook and Explore New Recipes:

Engage in cooking and experimenting with different recipes. Discovering new foods and flavors can make eating a more enjoyable and creative experience.



Practice unconditional permission to eat:

Allow yourself to enjoy treats and indulgences in moderation without guilt, whenever you want.



Reject the Diet Mentality:

Move away from restrictive diets and instead focus on nourishing your body with a balanced and varied selection of foods. Diets often lead to a cycle of restriction and overindulgence.



Build a Support System:

Surround yourself with positive influences who support your journey towards a healthier relationship with food.

Consider seeking guidance from a registered dietitian or coach who specializes in intuitive eating.



WHAT IS MY RELATIONSHIP TO THE FOOD I AM CRAVING?

05

This ties in to point 4 above. If our relationship to a specific food isn't the best, this may lead to cravings. Our brains are wired in the sense that **we want what we cant have**. Restriction and food rules lead to cravings, food obsession, feelings of loss of control, and potentially binges. Stop labelling foods as good or bad: **all foods fit into a healthy diet**.

Whats the solution? 1. Practice **Moderation Instead of Elimination**: Instead of completely eliminating "bad" foods, consider incorporating them in moderation more often. 2. **The way you talk about food matters**. Avoid words and phrases such as good/bad, healthy/unhealthy, guilt-free, cheat-meal, 'I've earned it' and replace it with more positive language. 3. Get familiar with the concept of **food habituation**.



WHAT IS FOOD HABITUATION?



Food habituation is a really cool concept.

Food habituation is a psychological and physiological process where repeated exposure to a particular food leads to a decrease in the desire for that food over time. In simpler terms, as you become more accustomed to a specific food, your interest or craving for it tends to diminish.

Practicing food habituation involves gradually exposing yourself to specific foods to reduce cravings and promote a balanced approach to eating.

In the beginning, you might find yourself eating too much than what feels good of the previously forbidden foods, but as you continue to give yourself permission to eat your “off-limits” foods, something magical happens...

food loses its power over you. You start wanting it sometimes, but not all the time. And you don't need as much of it to feel satisfied. This is the unconditional permission to eat **and** food habituation at work.

*“ Wonderful things
are especially
wonderful the first
time they happen,
but their
wonderfulness wanes
with repetition ”*

*- Psychologist Daniel
Gilbert explains the
concept of Food
Habituation.*

HOW HAVE I BEEN SLEEPING LATELY?

06

Hungry all the time? A bottomless pit? Only craving fast food? I think we have all been there. One of the reasons we can feel like this is lack of sleep. The quality and duration of sleep play a significant role in regulating hunger hormones and influencing food choices. Even just one night of bad sleep can lower our satiety hormone leptin, and increase our hunger hormone ghrelin. What this means is that you are hungrier, but your body is less receptive to fullness. In addition, we are experiencing an increased desire for sugar and processed calorie dense food (our bodies want quick energy!) AND we are more likely to give in to these cravings. Moreover, I think we can all agree that our mood and motivation after a short night isn't the best :-)

Whats the solution?

Prioritize rest and a good nights sleep :-) By paying attention to your sleep patterns and prioritizing adequate and quality sleep, you can positively influence your appetite regulation, make healthier food choices, and reduce the likelihood of intense cravings associated with sleep deprivation.



A stack of three pink macarons with a dark filling, and one more pink macaron leaning against them. The background is a soft, light pink gradient.

07

IS MY HUNGER PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL?

Learning to tell the difference between physical and emotional hunger will help you make informed, conscious and intentional decisions regarding what to eat and when. **In today's society we are triggered to eat by a number of factors that have nothing to do with physical hunger**, and knowing the difference can be challenging.

Eating for emotional reasons isn't inherently bad (emotional eating can actually be a very healing and nourishing thing if done "right"), but creating awareness around your behavior and physical (and mental) hunger cues is crucial.

Whats the solution?

1. **Mindful Awareness:** Get to know your hunger cues by paying attention to the sensations in your body (how does hunger feel for you?). Be mindful of the timing of your meals, and the specific triggers that may prompt the desire to eat.
2. **Check-In with Emotions:** Before eating, take a moment to check in with your emotions. Are you feeling stressed, anxious, bored, or sad? Experiment with non-food coping strategies such as going for a walk, or calling a friend.



A NOTE ON EMOTIONAL EATING

Emotional eating is a nuanced and complex topic that a guide of this size can only touch briefly upon. If you find yourself struggling with emotional eating, please know that you are not alone in facing these challenges. It's a common aspect of our relationship with food, and many individuals navigate this journey.

In my work with clients, addressing emotional eating is a significant focus, and I've witnessed the transformative power of seeking support. If you feel that emotional eating is impacting your well-being, consider reaching out to a professional who can provide personalized guidance and strategies to help you find balance and build a healthier relationship with food.

Remember, your well-being is a priority, and there's strength in seeking assistance on your journey towards a balanced and positive relationship with food.



BONUS RESOURCE

How do I know the difference between a craving (emotional hunger) and physical hunger? Checking in with yourself before reaching for food and simply asking yourself the question “*Am I hungry?*”, is a great place to start.

But there are several things that distinguish a craving from physical hunger. This simple check-list might help you tell the difference.



PHYSICAL HUNGER

- Builds up gradually, and goes away when eating
- Increases the longer we wait
- Satisfaction levels increase as you go from hungry to full, and you generally stop eating when you have had enough
- A general desire for any food, you just want to eat something and still the hunger
- You experience physical signs of hunger, i.e. a rumbling stomach, headache, low energy.

EMOTIONAL HUNGER

- Comes on quickly and intensely and might not go away when eating
- Might decrease the longer we wait
- A sense of satisfaction is hard to reach
- You have a desire for a particular food, taste or texture
- Increases with certain emotions, such as anger, stress, boredom or even happiness

STILL DON'T KNOW WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE PHYSICALLY HUNGRY?



Here are some questions I have my clients regularly ask themselves:

1. Am I really hungry? What else is going on? Do I want to eat because I am stressed, bored, lonely (and so on)? Did something just happen that changed my mood/state of mind?

2. When did I eat for the last time? If it's 3-4 hours ago, there is a big probability that you are hungry and need a meal.

3. What did I eat last time? The size and quality of your meal can also be a reason you are hungrier earlier than anticipated.



Journaling can be a powerful tool to help you figure out if you are emotionally or physically hungry by providing a structured way to reflect on your eating behaviors, emotions, and physical sensations.

Use it as a way to explore emotions, reflect on your day, express gratitude, or document physical sensations. But do remember that journaling is a personal practice, and there are no strict rules.



Thank you for your time - and Congratulations on reaching the end of this guide. I hope you've found valuable insights and practical strategies to empower you on your journey to conquer cravings and achieve your health and fitness goals.

Remember, this guide is just the beginning of your adventure toward a healthier and more mindful lifestyle. Embracing change takes time and patience, so be kind to yourself throughout the process.

If you have further questions, just want to chat, or are ready to take the next step, I am here for you.

xo Johanna

WORK WITH ME



In need of more personalized guidance? Let's make it happen. Drop me a message, and let's chat about how we can make your health and fitness goals come true. To explore how we can work together or if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. A discovery call is always for free - and if I am not the right coach for you, I will do my best to refer you to someone who is!



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