



THE ENERGY BLUEPRINT



Dieting Mindset

Each and every one of you is a fundamentally unique human — and that means each of you requires a personalized approach. The “one-size-fits-all” strategy that nearly every fitness and nutrition guru has been preaching for years has clearly failed most, if not all of us.

It is impossible to invent a single specific weight loss protocol that everyone can succeed at. We are not machines. We have brains, emotions, beliefs, and experiences that shape our outcomes. So, we need to individualize a set of principles to our unique needs.

We’ve spent a lot of time in this program talking about diet and lifestyle changes that can maximize fat loss and help you succeed with dieting. And now it’s time to address one of the most important parts of dieting — your mindset.

In this lesson, I will be going over some of the psychological reasons why you may be getting tripped up on your fat loss attempts.

Abstainer Vs. Moderator



Abstainer



Moderator

Do you thrive with dietary flexibility and do better with blurred lines around what you can and can't eat? Awesome! Keep enjoying your diet plan and the little treats you can moderate.

Not everyone is a moderator, and that's okay!

Abstinence is mental freedom to those who fail at moderation. Many people find it far easier to give something up altogether than to indulge in moderation because moderation simply doesn't work. For example, not being able to stop at just one or two cookies.

I'm sure you already know exactly what category you fit in.

There's no right way or wrong way — you just need to find what works for your brain. If moderators try to abstain, they feel rebellious and usually end up binging on all the off limit foods. If abstainers attempt to be moderate, they spend an inordinate amount of time rationalizing why and how much they should eat.

Restriction is not disordered or inherently bad. Believe it or not, I think a lack of restriction inevitably leads to an unhealthy weight and relationship with food in a subset of individuals.

No matter what category you fall in, **most all humans have foods with no breaks.**

Meaning when they start they just can't stop... or it's incredibly difficult to stop. The foods that hit your pleasure centers hard will be completely different from what hits your best friend's, so there is no blanket recommendation here. You probably don't need to do much work here either. I am guessing your brain has already formed a list of foods that are off limits for you.

We all must take our individual physiology, personality, and lifestyle into consideration when we are deciding what moderation means to us and how we are going to define it.

Remember this — one person's moderation is another person's bender or restrictive diet. It's completely subjective. Moderation becomes an issue when you are trying to moderate something, like that delicious dessert, that is negatively impacting your life or leading you further away from your goals.

As for restriction, it becomes an issue when you view your diet as all or nothing, or start to isolate yourself due to your dietary restrictions, or cause nutrient deficiencies and other health problems from excessive restriction. If you experience anxiety around food, that is also a good indication that you are not simply practicing discipline and have crossed into disordered territory.

In the real world, we all have to deal with friends, family, and co-workers that will interject their opinions on what works for you. As an abstainer, you will get commentary like “you aren't being healthy and this is going to lead to an eating disorder. You're being extreme.” On the flip side, there are the abstainers who want to tell moderators, “Your problems are clearly because you want a hot body but aren't willing to give up the idea that moderating isn't helping you reach your goals.”

It's easy to get on a moral high-horse here in either camp. But the truth is somewhere in between. Everyone must do this cost-benefit analysis on their own and not be doing things just to please others. If fat loss is your goal, you need to identify your unique needs to facilitate your success. The most important thing here is our own individual relationships with food, not what others think of your relationship with food.

Which One Are You?

I'm sure many of you already know whether you can moderate some foods successfully. But if you aren't sure and want some guidance, then answer several questions:

- How strong is your ability to control how much you eat?
- Do you feel satisfied eating just a bite of something you love eating?
- Are there certain foods you absolutely crave?
- Do you spend an annoying amount of time and energy thinking about food?
- Have you ever ate large amounts of food to the point of being uncomfortable?

If you have trouble controlling the amount of food you eat, especially with certain foods, then you are definitely an abstainer; at least when it comes to those foods.

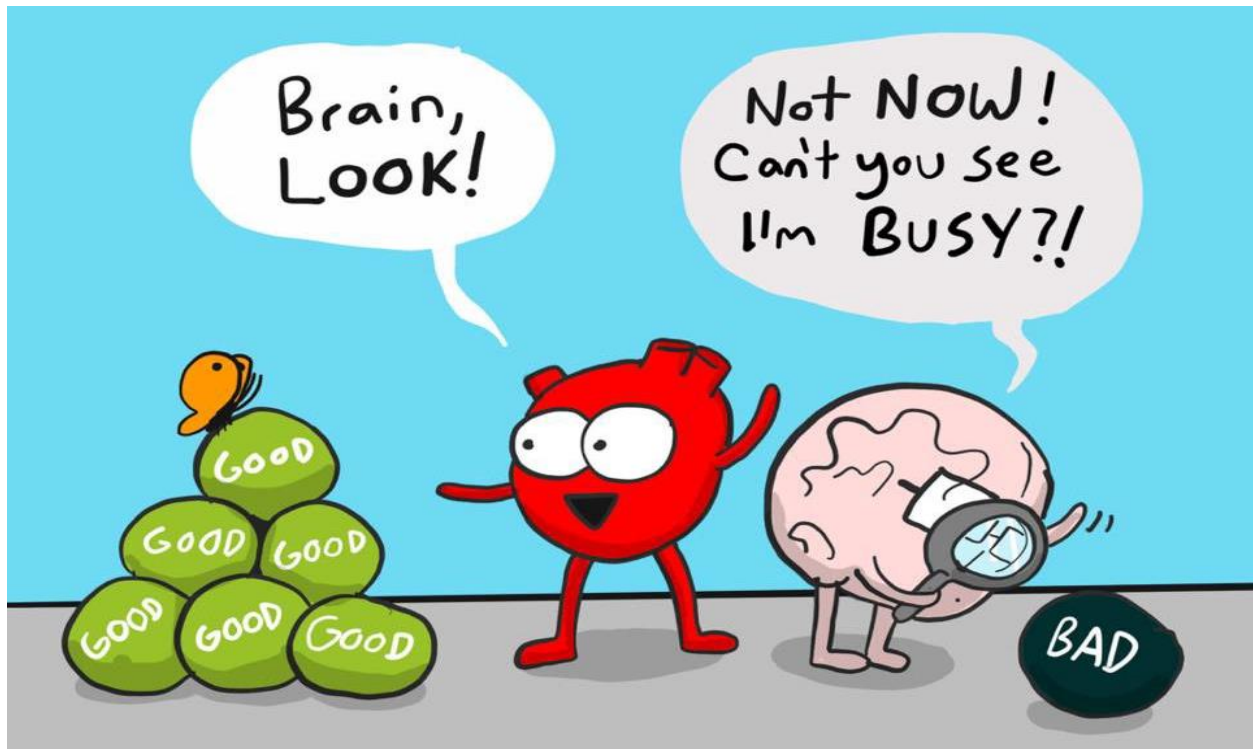
The Negativity Bias

Next, let's talk about the negativity bias, since it is going to be your dieting demon if you never address it. Throughout evolutionary history, we have benefited from focusing on the negatives. If you hurt yourself, you know not to do that again.

Consider this: if you are hunting through the savannah and you find some honey to eat, then you are fed for a day. If you eat a poisonous berry, you're out of commission for several days; you may even risk death.

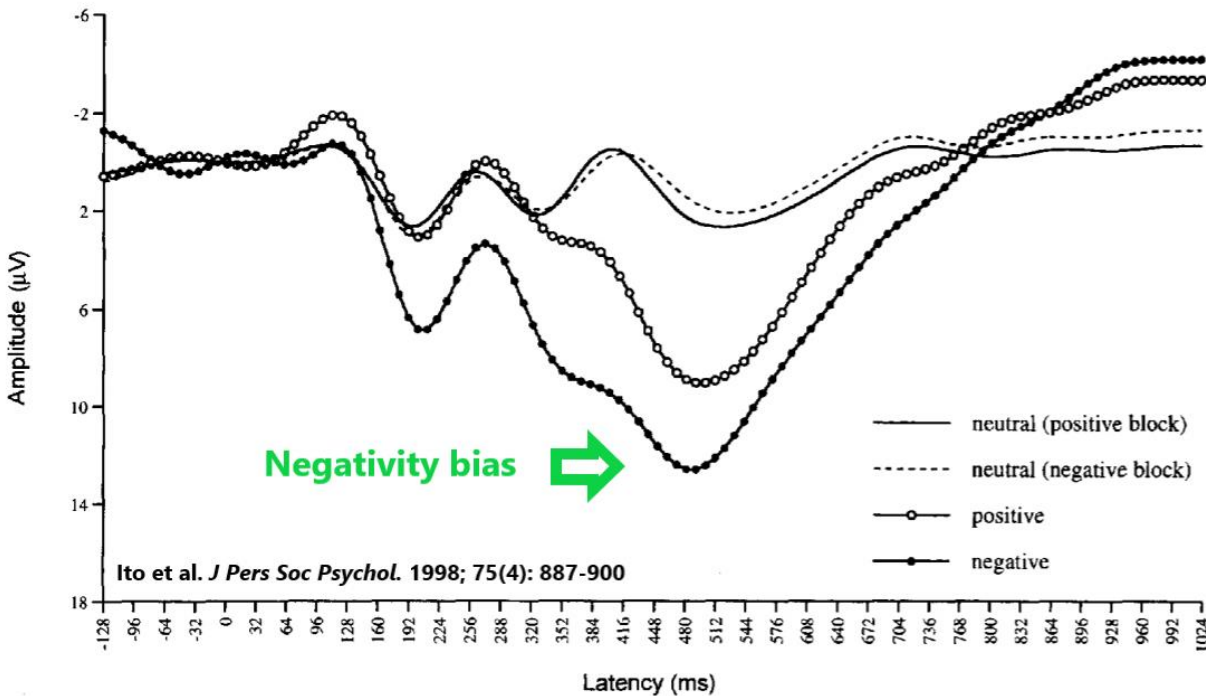
Pain is a strong motivator.

Of course, we aren't fighting for our lives anymore, not in the same way. That hyperfocus on the bad has stuck with us though, in what is called the [negativity bias](#).



When making judgments, people [consistently](#) weigh the negative aspects of an event more heavily than the positive aspects. That is abysmal when making judgements about ourselves, because we give more weight to our failures than our successes. And no, this isn't just some psychological "woo" — we have neuroscientific evidence for a negativity bias.

- In [one study](#), researchers from Ohio State University recruited students to look at a bunch of pictures designed to be emotionally positive, negative, or neutral, while also measuring brain activity. Negative pictures elicited the greatest attention-grabbing brain response.



- In [another study](#), these researchers expanded upon their findings by showing that humans are able to discern negative stimuli much more rapidly than positive stimuli. In other words, you can identify negativity faster.

Amazingly, the brain is able to differentiate negative from positive information within 100 milliseconds of exposure.

The simplicity of the negative bias is our saving grace. It is a powerful and insurmountable bias preserved throughout evolution due to its usefulness. So, fighting it is a losing battle. Instead, **acknowledging its existence and its mismatch with the modern world can help us keep our focus on the positive and not get discouraged.**

When you find yourself in a depressive state focusing on everything that went bad, or that can go bad, check yourself. Use that prefrontal cortex of rational thought to remind yourself that your thoughts are normal... and changeable. Start

thinking about all the positives that you're overlooking; they probably add up to quite a happy pile.

Be Realistic



One of the best ways to minimize the negativity bias is to be realistic with your expectations. To illustrate this point, let's take a look at how two women approach weight loss.

Mary and Suzy are both overweight. They have the same circumstances in life that led to their weight gain, and they both decide to use the exact same diet program to lose weight over the next six months. Both want to shed about 80 lbs in total; the only difference between them is their expectations: Mary wants to lose 80 lbs on the weight loss program, while Suzy decides to start with 30 lbs.

After three months on the program, both women lose about 20 lbs. To Suzy, this is phenomenal because she is almost to her goal! She is encouraged to keep

sticking to the diet and make progress. But for Mary, the goal is still distant, and she becomes discouraged, abandoning the diet for others that may bring better results.

These women had the exact same experience, but their *expectations* about the weight loss program and the goals that they set for themselves impacted their response to the experience.

The point being: **we need to be realistic with our goals and expectations if we are to be successful**. Dalle Grave from Villa Garda Hospital, Italy has done some fascinating research in this area, showing that most people have unrealistic expectations for weight loss.

- An [analysis](#) of 1900 adults with obesity found that, on average, they wanted to lose 23–32% of their body weight within a year.
- Of those obese individuals enrolled in a weight loss program, [half dropped out](#) by one year, with the biggest predictor being the expected weight loss.
- For every [1% increase](#) in desired weight loss, there is a 2–5% increase in the risk of dropping out.

It's wonderful to be motivated to lose weight and have a strong desire to lose weight quickly, but we need to maintain realistic expectations when dieting. Remember, we tend to focus on negatives, and the further away the goal, the more opportunities there are for perceived failures.

If weight loss isn't happening as fast as you would like, you may think whatever you are doing is not working when it is, just not to your expectations. This perceived failure may in fact be great progress towards your goals, but those expectations cloud this realization. In other words, it wasn't actually a case of what you were doing not working — the only real issue was that you had unrealistic expectations for how fast you should lose weight, and it caused you to misperceive what was going on.

Willpower

In the stress lesson (Lesson 13), we talked about how being chronically stressed can lead to a greater appetite and emotional eating. So why can't we just power through the stress-induced eating desires?

So many of us think that quitting any detrimental habits — from frivolous shopping and spending, to smoking and drinking, to eating too much — is just a matter of willpower. The thinking follows the line that if we struggle to stop, then we just need to try harder. But there is plenty of evidence showing that trying harder doesn't always help.



Willpower is a limited resource that we need to treat as a valued asset. We can maximize our willpower by developing habits and managing our energy.

It all comes down to ego depletion with continued decision making as the day progresses. Every choice you consciously make requires willpower, and decision fatigue is the deteriorating quality of decisions that are made as time progresses due to ego depletion.



Think of willpower like a muscle that can be strengthened through regular use, but can also become fatigued with continuous use and needs time to recover.

The more decisions that you are required to make through the day, the worse you are at weighing out the costs and benefits of various things. When you come home after a long, stressful day, ego depletion and decision fatigue are going to make resisting that jar of cookies, or a pint of ice cream far more difficult.

This entire idea can be traced back to the landmark 1998 [chocolate-and-radish experiment](#) conducted by social psychologist Roy Baumeister from Case Western Reserve University.

- 1) In the first part of the study, study participants were locked in a room that smelled of freshly baked chocolate cookies and were simultaneously taunted by images of actual cookies and other chocolate-flavored treats. Some of the participants were allowed to indulge their sweet tooth, while others were asked to abstain and eat radishes instead — they were not happy about it.
- 2) In the second part of the study, all the participants were required to solve a puzzle, one that was notably difficult. The radish eaters gave up rather quickly, devoting less than half of the time of the chocolate cookie eaters took to try and solve the puzzle. In other words, those who had to use willpower to resist the cookies earlier did not have the willpower to power through another task.

This study paved the way for a slough of research demonstrating that willpower is a finite resource. In fact, a [meta-analysis](#) of 83 independent studies found that

decision fatigue is a real thing and clearly impacts task performance, effort, perceived difficulty, negative affect, subjective fatigue, and blood even glucose levels!

And it appears that our worst behaviors and desires come out first as willpower dwindles, according to a later [review of this topic](#) by Bauermeister,

“Some people are habitually, dispositionally motivated to act in a certain way, such as to eat or drink too much, misbehave sexually, or interact in intimacy-seeking or intimacy-avoiding ways. They know these behaviors are not optimal, and so they ordinarily manage to refrain from them. Ego depletion appears to reduce their effort to alter their behavior toward the socially or personally desirable ideal. Put another way, when people’s self-regulatory resources have been depleted, the nonoptimal inner motivations exert a greater influence on behavior. The stronger the desire, the greater the releasing effect of ego depletion. In this case, therefore, individual differences in desire produce bigger behavioral differences in the depleted state than when people are fully able to self-regulate.”

So, why doesn’t ego depletion seem to affect everyone similarly? Or affect every “bad habit” to a similar extent? Simply, it comes down to what you try and habitually control. For example, dieters routinely seek to control their eating, while nondieters do not. Thus, dieters eat more when ego-depleted, but the eating of nondieters remains unchanged. In these cases, the individual difference is in the quest to control the behavior rather than in the motivation to perform the behavior.

Ego Depletion Doesn't Make Evolutionary Sense

Why did we not evolve perfect self-control? Or rather, why did we evolve with self-control that fatigues as we use it? Evolution has [finely honed](#) our minds to make good decisions. It has endowed us with abilities to do [cost-benefit computations](#) that are much more complicated than many self-control problems require:

- Our brains can simultaneously track multiple fluctuating variables at many timescales;
- We can detect subtle changes in probability;
- We can anticipate others' strategies several levels deep;
- Time biases do not seem to be a problem either, as many animals, including humans, can optimize reward rate to within a few percentage points of optimal.

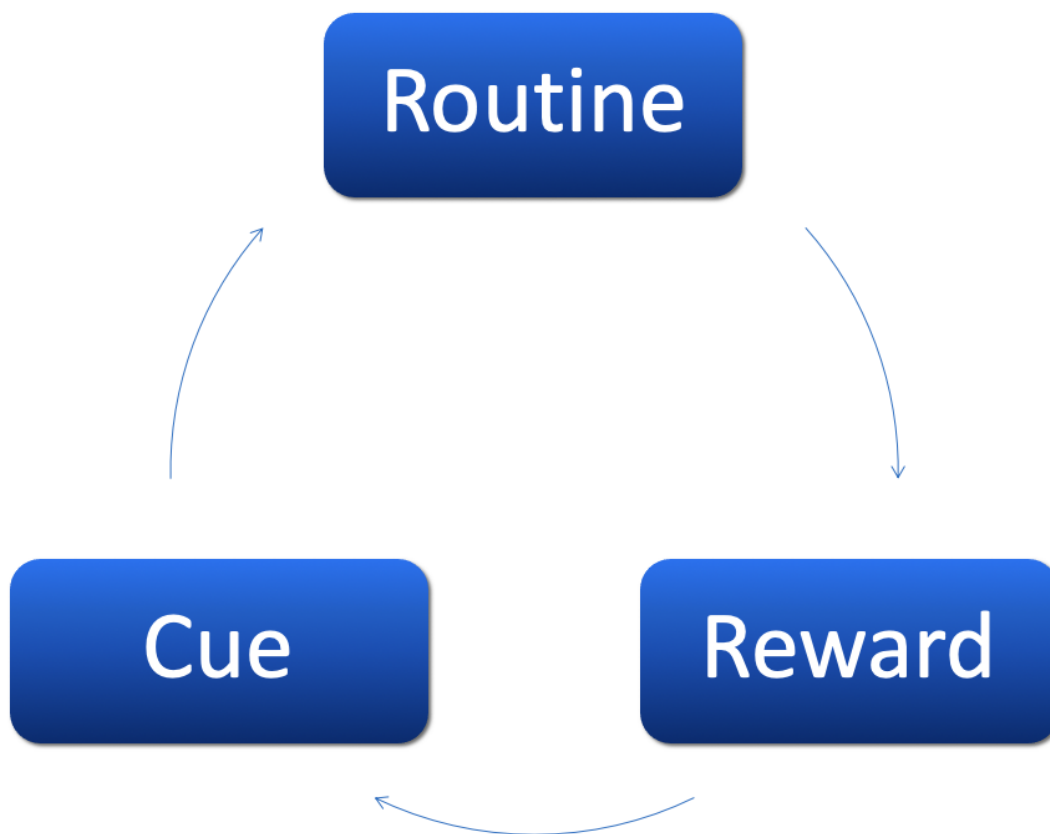
The answer is because self-control requires awareness and active thought. The [brain uses](#) sensory, internal, and learned information to guide the selection of actions. Only when these actions are performed regularly does our self-control become seemingly limitless — because the brain processes them in a more efficient way: automatization.

Regular decision making leads to habit formation. The first time you resist a cookie, self-control was needed. The hundredth time, you probably didn't even think about the cookie because the choice was made before you could be aware of it. Forming habits takes time, but ultimately frees your mind from the limits of willpower and ego depletion and frees up space in your awareness to do other things.

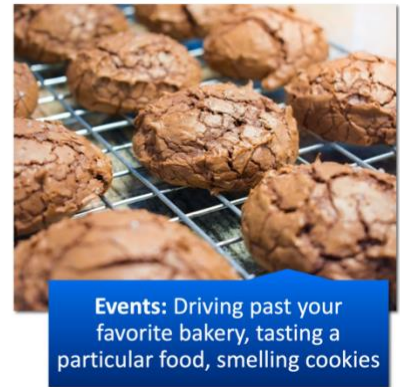
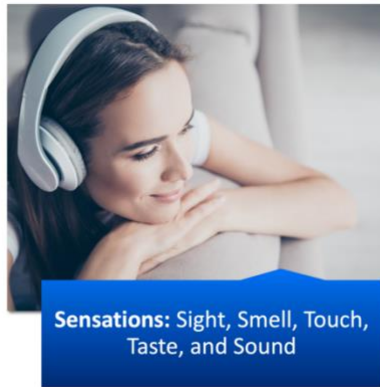
We didn't evolve for perfect self-control because the idea of perfect self-control is reserved for repetitive tasks done through habit. That does not mean there are two systems, only that there are two tendencies: habit (automatic) and controlled. And these types may be relative, not absolute; we may have a spectrum of processes ranging from automatic to controlled.

Habit Development

The first step to avoid succumbing to ego depletion and emotional eating is understanding the craving cycle and how habits work. Understanding cues, routines, and rewards can help us to break an unhelpful established habits — such as emotional eating.



A cue is what we call the trigger to a habit. It is the initiating thing that prompts us to do a [routine without thought](#).

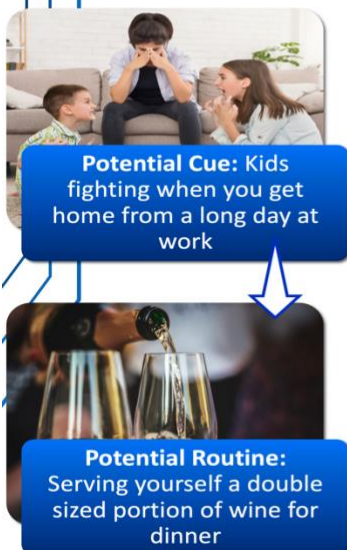


Cues can include

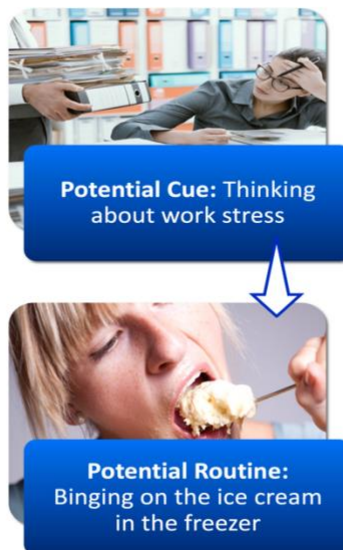
- Emotions: Stress, Depression, Anxiety, Social Anxiety, Sadness.
- Sensations: Sight, Smell, Touch, Taste, and Sound.
- Events: Driving past your favorite bakery, tasting a particular food, smelling cookies.

We will never obliterate cues. There will always be emotions, events, and sensations — all the cues that [initiate](#) the desire to complete a habit.

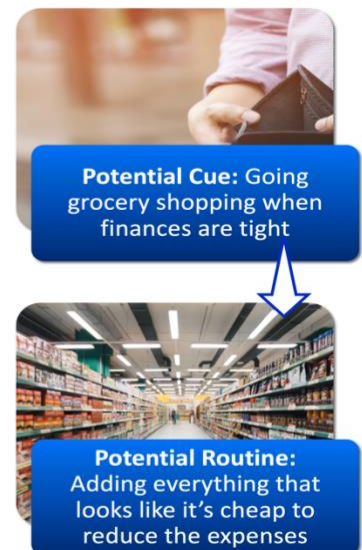
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



The routine is the behavior or action you complete when your brain receives a cue.

- Potential Cue: Kids fighting when you get home from a long day at work.
 - Potential Routine: Serving yourself a double sized portion of wine for dinner.
- Potential Cue: Thinking about work stress.
 - Potential Routine: Binging on the ice cream in the freezer.
- Potential Cue: Going grocery shopping when finances are tight.
 - Potential Routine: Adding anything and everything that looks like it's cheap and will reduce the grocery expenses.

The last step is the reward, this is where your brain goes into autopilot mode and decides if this habit loop is valuable and worth remembering for the future. **When we develop habits, our brain no longer fully participates in decision making.**

Developing a new routine:

1. You have to genuinely enjoy it. If you hate running and you attempt to substitute it when you're stressed for mindlessly eating, the new routine will fail every time.
2. It includes an element of your senses. This is due to the brain using your senses to create new memories. Therefore, utilizing your senses contributes to habit formation.

The reward for doing a routine is feeling good. When your brain receives the cue and you respond with the routine, your brain releases [dopamine](#) to support continuation of the routine. The higher the dopamine output, such as with hyper-

palatable foods, the more likely you are to repeat the routine again. This pattern is the basis of the emotional eating cycle.

To replace the emotional eating habit, the cue (example: cookies on the counter) and the reward (example: relief of stress) will stay the same. The only thing you want to change is the routine. You may have to experiment with a few different routines before it sticks.



If you utilize the same cue, and provide the same reward, you can shift your routines, and habits will change. All habits can change despite “triggers”.

Last point to note: It takes around two months for most people to change a behavioral pattern. Phillippa Lally, a health psychology researcher at University College London, published a [study](#) that showed that it takes anywhere from 18 to 254 days to form a new habit.

But worry not, slipping up doesn't affect the habit-forming process. You can make mistakes, just be consistent with the cue and the reward, and the habit will develop in time. How long [depends](#) on the type of behavior, the circumstances, and the particular individual.

If you slip up it isn't the end of the world. Building new eating habits is not an all or nothing process. You haven't undone all your hard work if you slip. Just refocus and continue with the behavioral modifications you're attempting to make.

Motivation

Developing new habits isn't easy, mind you. In the process of pushing forward to achieve goals and develop new habits, many people ultimately lose motivation and give up.

One reason for the loss of motivation is the [fading affect bias](#), which describes how we tend to forget about unpleasant emotions and experiences more quickly than pleasant ones. For example, your motivation to lose weight is probably going to be pretty high when your doctor tells you that you are starting to develop diabetes.

So, you diet, and you try to change your diet to facilitate weight loss. Well, as time goes on, you may start to forget about the looming diabetes diagnosis and retain all your memories of how good you felt eating ice cream. So, the ice cream habit starts to once again take hold.

Every single one of us starts off strong, and we all inevitably lose some steam. I guarantee that you'll want to throw in the towel at some point, but remember that overcoming these humps are where the real progress is made.

Remember, this is a life practice and not a life sentence.

We've all been so conditioned to believe that giving up our self-soothing habits is some form of torture. We are under the false assumption that we are having to give up the things we love in order to lose weight. We tell ourselves that we are living a sad life with no fun because we can't eat the food we want, all the time.

None of this is true. You aren't depriving yourself of anything; you are instead choosing to feel good. **Refocus your thoughts on all that you have to gain rather than what you're perceiving to be a loss.**

And realize that motivation comes from within. You purchased this fat loss program because **you** wanted to change. A lot of individuals perpetually look to the outside for motivation — friends, family, a weight loss contest at work. This external motivation won't last.

For you to be successful, **you have to actually want it.** You have to set goals for yourself. You have to start thinking differently about your diet and lifestyle. It doesn't matter what other people think; what matters are your thoughts.

Here's why: external motivators work only when present. If you had a coach following you around all-day, everyday, then chances are pretty good you would stay on track with what you are doing, regardless of whether you actually desired it. But that's not how life works. That coach is not always going to be around, and you'll use those opportunities as moments to do what you want.

- If you don't want to lose weight, then you'll go back to old habits when the coach isn't around.
- If you do want to lose weight, then you'll develop new habits regardless of the coach's presence.

This is why you must change your underlying beliefs about what your new way of eating is offering you. It's the difference between **viewing eating behaviors as freely chosen vs. enforced.**

And keep in mind that motivation isn't something you "have" or "don't have". It's not something to wait around to be inspired with. It's created by your small actions towards the goal. You set a goal and work towards it — motivation is

developed in the process. The more small successes you have towards the goal, the more you build motivation to continue.

Reframing Faulty Beliefs

You need to accept responsibility for your beliefs and actions. Everything you do is within your power; to believe otherwise is to believe you are a helpless victim. And that's not true.

For most of us, the sticking point is where part of you enjoys the freedom of eating and drinking whatever you want, which the other part of you knows that it is making you fat. The disconnect between your beliefs and actions is called *cognitive dissonance*.

You aren't a hypocrite. You aren't broken. You are human. This is normal.

The key to kicking any detrimental habit to the curb is the reconciliation of any opposing beliefs between your conscious and unconscious minds. True zen in your relationship with food only comes when it is authentic and easy — not white-knuckled, not forced.

If you are still engaging in behaviors that are contrary to your goal, then you still have some cognitive dissonance and you still perceive a benefit in doing those behaviors. It isn't the fault of your environment, or your family, or anything outside of yourself — it is your fault and you need to take responsibility. Only then can you actively start working to change your desires so that your behaviors are in line with your goals.

Freedom comes when the desire is absent, when turning down the foods that harm you becomes an act of self love and empowerment, rather than deprivation and disappointment.

Changing our core beliefs seems easy — you simply stop believing outdated shit that is no longer serving you. However, it takes concentrated effort and introspection to develop to identify the faulty rationale you use to justify detrimental behaviors.

It can really help if you focus on what you have to gain rather than what you have to give up.



You eat all the right foods, but detest every moment, longing for the day this will end because you have to consistently deny yourself the foods you enjoy eating and say no to going out with your friends because you believe you can't have a good time without alcohol and pizza.



You eat all the right foods because you enjoy eating them, don't feel deprived by saying no to foods that no longer serve you, and are able to go out with friends because you are always in control of your actions and don't victimize yourself to the environment.

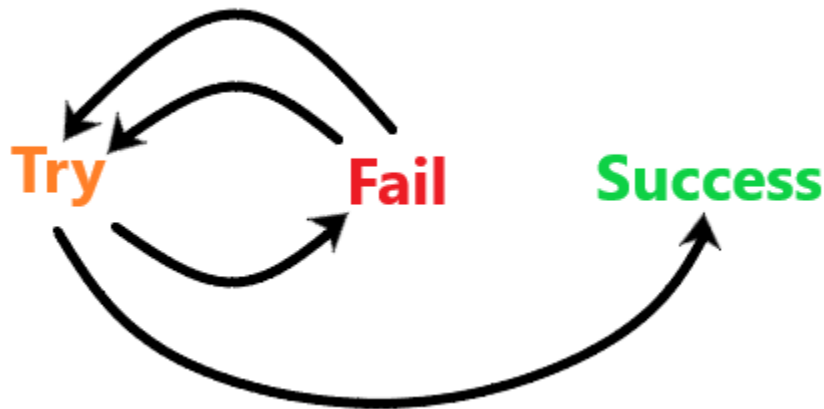
Think about how different the dieting experience would be with these two mindsets:

- You eat all the right foods, but detest every moment, longing for the day this will end because you have to consistently deny yourself the foods you enjoy eating and say no to going out with your friends because you believe you can't have a good time without alcohol and pizza.
- You eat all the right foods because you enjoy eating them, don't feel deprived by saying no to foods that no longer serve you, and are able to go out with friends because you are always in control of your actions and don't victimize yourself to the environment.

I can guarantee that the second mindset will set you up for a lifetime of success with little to no effort, while the first mindset is the basis of chronic yo-yo dieters. In order for things to be sustainable, you need to love what you are doing.

If you want to eat a cupcake, and you know it makes you feel awful, then accept that you are choosing to feel awful later on. Having the choice to indulge makes it less appealing. It's all about being in control and making choices. There's nothing wrong with eating the cupcake! The issue is blaming that action on something outside of yourself.

And guess what? You will make promises to yourself that you cannot keep. But failure is success if you learn from it; you only really fail if you stop trying. It's different when you frame it that way, isn't it?



The simple fact is that it's useless to focus on the failure itself. What really matters is what you do with it. How you use it to better your approach in the future. How much you learn from it. How you treat yourself after.

Failure is not a reflection of who you are as a human, but what you do with it is. Be the person who gets back up and keeps trying.

Fear of failure is often developed and initiated because we imagine the worst possible outcome, or we strive for that impossible perfection, and run from

rejection. But really you have two choices: accept being fat or do something about it; you have the power, you are in control.

Self-Love



Importantly, throughout the entire dieting process, throughout the self-analysis and altering of faulty beliefs, throughout the habit forming process, love yourself.

You are an amazing human, and any failures you encounter or any voices that tell you otherwise are wrong; plain and simple.

Hating the body you are currently in and having a negative body image

simply says “I reject the body given to me. I am at war against myself. I am no good. I am not enough. I am unlovable as I am. I do not deserve to experience the simple pleasures of bodily existence.”

This often leads to self-sabotage; black and white dichotomous behaviors.

Entertain me for a minute — a negative body image has our brains constantly in judgment mode, talking about it in a demeaning way, and performing acts of restriction and over-exercise that are punishing. It has us walking through the world in a constant state of disapproval of who we are at an intrinsic level. Hating anything about us that society deems as imperfect.

The way we counteract this and start to regain a healthy mindset is through acts of self love and acceptance of who we are showing up as in this world today. It is medicine and reprogramming of the virulent disease of body hate.

Healing our skewed body image requires courage, self-reflection, working through our painful emotions, and as with everything, time.

Have you ever found yourself more likely to self-soothe with food when you've had a bad day? If so, you're not alone. A lot of people have trouble navigating negative mood states and are very sensitive to intense negative emotions, like sadness, loneliness, shame, or depression.

One of the most common escapes is to binge eat or enjoy a generous helping of hyperpalatable food, as a means to momentarily escape, get relief from, or avoid these distressing emotions.

Think about it. Eating all our favorite foods at once gives us immediate pleasure and allows us, for a brief moment, to block out those intense negative emotions. But this isn't self-love. How could it be, if all it does is set you further from your weight loss goals?



**Mindfulness
exercises**



**Cognitive
reappraisal**



**Self-
compassion**

True self-love is making an effort to prevent negative emotions from getting the better of you:

- **Mindfulness exercises** where you sit with and accept your emotions as they are and without judgement. By being more mindful of your experiences, feelings, sensations, and thoughts, you will be more in control of your eating and less reactive and impulsive!
- **Cognitive reappraisal** where you try to generate positive interpretations or perspectives in a bad situation. Do your best to think about at least one positive that comes out of a seemingly negative experience.
- **Self-compassion** where you be more kind with yourself and recognise that everyone has a bad day. And because of this, there's no need to resort to harmful behaviours.

Another aspect of self-love is ensuring you find pleasure in life. When we start dieting, we often ignore our basic need for pleasure due to the “getting-shit-done” mindset. This is a mistake.

We need to work pleasure practices into our daily routine. This includes allowing yourself to experience pleasure when it comes to food — but food can't be your only source of pleasure. It needs to be diverse. Have at least a couple daily rituals that provide pleasure for you.

The solution here is as easy and as difficult as practicing receiving pleasure and letting go of guilt for accepting it into your life.

Be Authentic

Authenticity is a lifestyle decision. It is based on introspection, moral integrity, and a relentless commitment to maintain personal values, regardless of what anyone thinks of you.

It's an ability that rarely comes naturally to people, especially in today's society where we are encouraged to wear masks to get ahead. How do we possibly remain authentic in a world that is based on shady judgments constructed from other human's personal biases? We are conditioned to conform to inauthenticity.

The better we know and accept our authentic selves, the less inclined we are to pass judgement on our fellow humans. **Less judgment on others translates to more acceptance of ourselves.**

Our condemnation of others is deeply rooted in our own failures and insecurities. Unconscious drives at their finest. The more compassion and tolerance we develop for our own flaws, the easier it becomes to accept the faults of others.

A serious question you need to ask yourself when you find yourself tearing another human to shreds in your mind — **if you were happy with yourself, why would you want to bring other people down?**

Often, when we decide to present our masks to the world — our constructed facade — it is because we want to avoid the criticism and the 'shoulds' of everyone else. It is easier to compromise our personal values than to rock the metaphorical boat. We want to be accepted and loved by everyone. This goes back to our evolutionary drives to be accepted by the 'tribe'. It's evolutionarily programmed in, but now does a disservice in our lives.

Radical acceptance of our authentic nature is a very powerful point of personal transformation for restoring a healthy body image.

Final Points

When a food causes you physical pain (headache, tummy ache, bloating, stuffy nose, achy joints, breakouts, bleeding gums, etc.) or makes you feel otherwise crappy (anxious, tired or have insomnia), these foods are doing damage.

They are hurting you, and they have to go. Honor yourself.

Even if you love the taste or freedom that comes with not avoiding or restricting certain foods, it's hard to be truly happy when you don't feel well, when your hormones are off balance from food choices, or when you're not reaching your goals — sometimes those foods are part of the reason.

Take the time to think about the foods you really love and see what type of relationship you need to have with them in order to be happy.

Be honest and honor yourself.

The bottom line is you need to do the work. **If you want a meal plan and want a coach, but don't do any of the work to undo all of this conditioning, you will rebound every time.**

Mistakes will happen. They are part of the process and nothing to be feared. Failures teach us that after falling apart, we need to build ourselves back up. If you decide that you want to eat foods that have proven take you further from your goals, accept and honor your choice, and move on. Don't waste a second beating yourself up for a momentary choice that didn't support your higher goals. You're going to corkscrew, go backwards, and fall down — these are learning opportunities, not failures.

Check yourself. Breathe. Restart immediately.

This is not about deprivation, willpower, or missing out. It's simply about learning your truth. What works for you. Eliminating things standing in your way.

Rarely will you reach your goals without some failure first. But these failures are not meant to discourage you, they are meant to serve as a learning opportunity that can help propel you closer to your goals.

This is not about just being able to live without what has comforted you until this point. This is about living in our highest capacity and to our highest potential. This is about learning to be free of self sabotage. We've spent most of our lives in some disease state, in some form of discomfort — using whatever external means we could to not feel the way we do. Now is the time to shift this paradigm.

Focusing on the negatives and being scared of them is completely natural. The key is to acknowledge them without letting the negativity bias get the best of you. Change isn't easy, and it isn't perfect. Be thankful for the journey and all that it has to teach.

Daily Practices

You'll know if you're an abstainer or a moderator; you've probably spent most of your life as one or the other for a variety of things.

- **Abstainers:** Control your environment. You know you can't keep a bar of chocolate in the cupboard with hopes of eating just one piece per day. You need to make an effort to make your home environment conducive to your dieting needs.

If you have kids, including your spouse, you do not need to keep treats in the house. You can take them out to get ice cream and single-serve snacks. The kids don't need to be eating it regularly anyways.

- **Moderators:** There's not much to say here. You're somehow able to restrain yourself in the face of hyperpalatable foods. That's amazing. Just keep in mind that simply because you can get away with eating small portions of these types of foods does not mean that they should make up most of your diet.



To overcome the negativity bias, start journaling. Set some time aside every morning to write down the negative thoughts that you're obsessing over and reframe them. If you're having a hard time finding positivity, the so-called "silver lining," the easiest thing to do is simply ask yourself what are you learning from these experiences.

As far as unrealistic expectations go, realize that any progress is good progress. Even if the scale doesn't move, you're still building solid habits that will make you healthier and happier for a lifetime. It's going to be impossible to know what a realistic amount and rate of weight loss is, so don't get discouraged if your initial thoughts are a little exaggerated.

To minimize decision fatigue, minimize your options. Everything from food to clothing choices all take conscious thought, and minimizing how much thought goes into these tasks by reducing the options to pick from will maintain your willpower throughout the day. There's a reason why Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg wear the same outfit everyday.



Also, make big decisions early in the day, like planning out your meals for the rest of the day so that you no longer have to give it conscious thought — you already decided that in the morning.



To help with habit development, write it down. The habit loop contains a cue, a process, and reward. If there is something you do frequently that you are trying to change, then write down what it is you do, the cues that lead you to do it, and the rewards you perceive from doing it. It's a lot easier to manipulate the variables when you can

see them on a piece of paper.