

## Post Valentine's Binge

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You just devoured a whole box of left over Valentine's chocolates within a 30 second time frame. Ironically, they have been staring at you from the kitchen counter for over a month and you hardly even given them a thought. And then when you least expected it, BAM, you are overcome with a sudden urge that nothing short of bionic strength could have pulled you out of your outer body experience. With your head spinning with the culmination of wonderment and disgust, what the heck just happened? Over 2% of society suffers from an actual diagnosis 'binge eating' syndrome. Many more can empathize with tendencies similarly observed and experienced from time to time.

How can you do such a thing? Has your brain just short-circuited, what happened to the clear logical mind that you repeatedly prided yourself in? You have occasionally been down this road before and are just appalled at yourself for doing this unquestionably foolish behavior. To figure out how this transpired, we need to examine the past. Let's first review the function of how memory is formed.

Information is first perceived in the cerebral cortex. When the in-coming information is deemed important enough, it will then be computed in the short-term memory. Automatically your brain becomes like Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, the Umpa lumps will quickly discard any perceived irrelevant information. Your body has a wonderful tool of automatic memory spring cleaning. Certain items you are able to retrieve and utilize quickly for immediate use. Phone numbers, addresses, names can all be saved and utilized for approximately 30 seconds. Needed information may be consolidated into long term memory that is stored by the hippocampus of the limbic system.

There are several ways to guarantee more of a chance to be saved and stored in the long-term memory bank pile. If you rehearse a thought over and over again (memorizing a song or spelling words). If you always ate dessert after every meal it would be not normal to omit the dessert. If you are continuously told that desserts will make you feel better as a child then when you are sick or blue you might have an increased desire for desserts.

Things also stick in your mind more when relating to preexisting memories. How can you possibly go to the movies when you are supposed to not have popcorn? Is this some kind of bad joke? You MUST always have popcorn at the movies or the movie will be a

waste of time. You might recall a fond memory of eating milk and cookies with a loved one. Holiday time is a big trigger because your senses are associating you back to traditional memories. Who would want to change Grandma's wonderful recipes for the healthy alternative, memories might night be as cherished.

Meaningful information will also stick in your mind more. For example, you know you do not have energy and food has given you energy in the past; therefore, your memory might have you mistakenly desire a sweet to give you the extra energy boost. Logically, however, a ten minute cat nap will enhance energy without inevitably making you feel worse by ingesting undesired calories.

Strong emotions also leave the logical mind at home when you drudge up your past thoughts and actions. Birthday party's and happy occasions are all based around positive memories and want to be enjoyed when possible. How can someone possibly not have birthday cake on his or her birthday? It is considered bad luck and is frowned upon when done.

Logically, we all know food is not the answer to our emotional everyday life. We are especially certain when we get 7-9 hours of beautiful stage 5 Rapid Eye Movement sleep. When we had a great day at the office, had plenty of well-balanced meals during the day, had a stress free workday and walk into a wonderfully pleasant environment after the days end, we are more balanced to perform normal behaviors. However, aside from the movie the Steppford Wives, these days are far and few between.

When your vulnerabilities go up, your logical mind goes out of the window. That old folder formed during your potty training years is now being dusted off and is beginning to expose itself.

Crazed work, lack of sleep, high stress, and other life's little treats is quickly transforming your well-prided logic into Jell-O.

Serotonin leads to tryptophan when you ingest carbohydrates. This will give you that ahhhhh feeling. Calm you down, get you feeling comfortable again. The problem is you truly take 20 minutes for your cholecystokinin to catch up to your brain for fullness.

Food is also the quickest most immediate way to make you feel better.

A study observing rats found when those were exposed to very complicated mazes and increased stress levels, they desired the higher fat and calorie laden foods.

So is the answer don't fool with Mother Nature? On the contrary, you must let your brains do the walking BEFORE your old memory folder flies opened.

- Do NOT have those foods in the house. Even the ones that you will say, "I will never touch it". I have observed too many 'foot in mouth' episodes. Why test yourself. When things are wonderful, throw out the garbage.
- Always keep a journal. Write down what you eat for accountability.
- Weigh yourself. Again accountability.
- Plan ahead. NEVER go hungry. Eat healthy and frequently.

- Buddy system always helps. When you see that old folder surfacing head for the phone, door, call 911! It takes about 20 minutes to get rid of a food trigger. You need an escape route. Plan your mindset now.
- Remember, you CAN change and you have the choice to say no thank you. Just remember that the true treat is the treat of life and not the 30-day-old valentine chocolates!

In Good Health,  
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