

Why Can't We Make Up Our Minds?

by Linda Fiveson

Life is full of decisions we have to make. I'm sure it is something we do more than anything else in our day. Decision making is required in everything we do. Whether it's social, technical, about what to wear, what to do or how to do it there are decisions to be made. We make decisions about what to buy, where to go, who to be with and of course, what to eat! The "what ifs" seem to be what sabotage us in making the best decisions.

Some of us make a decision, then question the decision and constantly make more decisions about the same thing. There are decision makers that "make things happen" and there are those that "let things happen". Believe it or not, you can improve your decision making skills...even though it seems like such an automatic behavior. Often decisions do not resolve anything but force you into the position of needing to make another decision. It's difficult for our brains to hold many thoughts at the same time.

My point in writing this article is that the ONLY decision we know the answer to seems to be the one we are constantly in negotiation about. WHY can't we master the answer to the question about our eating?

So many factors influence our appetites. We blame stress, lack of time and planning, social events, busy family lifestyles, the environment, work, PMS and any other convenient reason we come up with at the time. I think instinct plays an important role in making decisions. We usually know what feels right and how to resolve and control a situation. Why do we question our instincts?

When the decision about food becomes the problem, maybe it's time to find out why? You would think that feeling great, looking great, regaining our confidence, feeling proud and happy, fitting into smaller sizes, waking up "loving ourselves" and not feeling regretful or worried about how we are going to lose weight would be enough. You would think that when we finally "own" the control over food, the feeling would be imprinted in our brains permanently. This is what we always wanted, so why are there questions? Why are we constantly negotiating with ourselves about what to eat?

"JUST DO IT!" I had a client who wore a t-shirt with those words on it. Maybe we can't resolve the reasons why we eat but we can change "what" we eat. Identify what triggers your eating thoughts. Remember, we think first, we anticipate next, we salivate and then it seems we can't stop thinking about the food until we get the temptation off our minds. And, how do we do it?? We either eat it or throw it away. Are there other choices available?

Always know that right is better than wrong when it comes to food choices just like everything else in life. It's not always about the portion size, time of day, why we eat or how we are eating. Sometimes we have to change our thoughts and other times, we have to change the food.

Here are some suggestions to help you when you find yourself in the "indecision" mode. Listen to your instincts, but don't let them boss you around. Think about what you can eat instead. If you still want the food you are thinking about, try a healthy, alternative one first. (I call it the 2 minute pause button). Learn how to reframe your thinking and slow up the impulsiveness. Think about your eating/dieting history.

I think memory can be a big enemy. Our memory is selective. We do remember how bad and guilty we feel after eating poorly, however, something becomes so over-powerful that

the memory of how we felt the last time we were in that same situation with food gets displaced. We ALWAYS feel awful. We have wins and we have misses which translate into the “who” you are and the “what” you are. Eaters will always be eaters and we can continue to eat when we make smart decisions.

When you are talking to yourself about what to do, always do what your first instinct told you. If there is a question, you will always have the answer. “Why do we do what we know we shouldn’t do? You have probably been in every social situation imaginable that involved making food choices. Think of them and ask yourself these questions. Was it successful? Could you change it? Did you have alternatives that you didn’t utilize? To put it simply, it’s a test of yes or no. No ifs, ands or buts! So why is it that what we KNOW what is right is always challenged? The best solution is to remove the INDECISION. And when you do, you also remove the chaos in your brain! And remember, you wear the wrong food decision on your body.

Linda Fiveson is a Nutritionist in Syosset, N.Y. In addition to counseling she sells her own line of foods which are all free of flour, sugar, gluten and refined carbohydrates. For more information call (516) 496-2300 or visit her website at www.lindafiveson.com