

Stop making excuses about why you are overeating

By Mandy Kendall

We just had a wonderful weekend with a houseful of guests. However, besides hours of fun and reminiscing, there was also quite a bit of indulging. When you are celebrating and entertaining it seems so much easier to say “oh what can it hurt just this once”. So now we need to get back on track and clean up our acts. The long weekend was fun but there are no more excuses now.

So what excuses do we use around food, why do we make them and what can we do about them?



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Here are this week's *Qwik-e* tips on how to change those excuses for good habits:

I deserve this – Rewarding with food is a dangerous precedent that is often started in childhood by well-meaning parents. When we reward ourselves, Serotonin (the happy hormone) is released which is then associated with whatever it is we are rewarding ourselves (which is more often than not an unhealthy food). Better to reward yourself with something healthy (a fun activity, a healthy food, etc.), which is what your brain will crave when you next go to reward yourself.

I've started so I'll finish – We all fall off the wagon at times, and it is all too easy to keep going. The trick is to stop yourself as soon as you realize the overindulgence. Put down the fork halfway through that piece of cake or that second helping. There is no law that you have to finish something just because it's on your plate (and, yes, your mom will forgive you when you tell her it's because you want to be healthier).

I've earned this – It's true that increased activity and exercise will have us burning more calories, but research has shown that we tend to seriously overestimate just how much more we can have. Try to refuel with nutrient rich foods as carbohydrate-rich foods can lead to slower recovery and increased inflammation.

Eating helps me when I'm stressed – A study published in *Appetite* found that foods like chocolate reduce feelings of stress for about three minutes, but then the stress returns. In the long run eating to control stress actually makes things worse. During stressful times our stress hormone cortisol makes you crave sugary food. However after eating sugary foods your blood sugar spikes, then crashes, making you feel irritable and prone to stress all over again. The good news is that you can lower your cortisol levels without calories by practicing relaxation methods such as deep breathing, stretching, sipping black tea, listening to soothing music, etc.

I'm addicted to it, I can't give it up – We tend to be addicted to the way a food makes us feel. Sugar especially affects our brain and body chemistry and how we feel. However, we can still get that feeling from other healthier foods (whole pieces of fruit for example) if we give our bodies time to adjust. Try taking a few days break from soda or a favorite sweet treat, exchanging it for a healthier option and see how different it makes you feel.

I don't eat more than anybody else I know – Studies show that if your friends and family are overweight and/or unhealthy, then chances are you will be as well. Also, women will often eat similar amounts of food that their male partners do, when on average our calorie requirements might only be two-thirds that of our men. Ask a professional dietician to help you assess your personal requirements.

It's healthy so I can have more of it – A study from Cornell found that we become victims of something called the health halo. When we think a food is healthy we tend to eat more of it. It is still wise to be cautious of portion sizes, even with so called healthier foods, and check food labels to make sure the food is really nutritious and we are not being drawn into a marketing ploy.

It was just there – To help prevent eating for convenience have a kitchen clear out to get unhealthy options out of temptations way. Convenience food tends to be just that ... a convenience and nothing else. Basic rule of thumb; the longer a food's shelf life, the less nutritious it is. Also, try to at least be aware of why you are eating something. Hunger? Boredom? Emotion? If it's boredom or emotion, just make a mental note of what lies underneath it, you may be surprised at what patterns emerge over time and of areas that might need addressing.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.