

Non-Food Related Satiety Tips for Easier Fat Loss

Fat loss is the holy grail of the health and fitness industry, and as such, everyone involved in the training and nutrition community has opinions about what is best where exercises and diet are concerned. But what if they were all missing the point? What if the decisions pertaining to food you and your clients take every day were affected by factors few are aware of?

In my article the myth of discipline, I exposed why I think discipline is over-rated to initiate change and growth in your life. And according to researchers, the same discipline is not any more useful when it comes to making smart decisions made about food choices and quantities.

And it appears there is LOTS of decisions related to food taken every day. Over 200 (1 – Mindless eating) of them according to Brian Wansink of Cornell University. And most if not all of them have little do to with willpower. So if you're convinced you can't diet or you confuse your mouth with a vacuum, read on.

1 - Eating Small When Size Matters

You may have heard of the “small plate” movement, an idea spear-headed by researchers such as Brian Wansink, which aimed at reducing the size of the plate we put our food in. Research has shown that our brain is fooled into eating more when the same amount of food is put in a larger plate than when it is put in a smaller plate, because the volume contrast is sharper. This worked with bowls of ice cream (REF) or any other types of plate (REF) and was reflected in cafeterias as well.

Even just having a measure of where you are situated as far as portion is enough to make someone aware of how much is being eaten and positively influences satiety (REF), such as this study where segmenting a tube of potato chips helped curb hunger. Another study looked into segmenting plates to make us aware of how much food was being consumed, with similar hunger-controlling results (REF)

Conversely, the reverse is also true in situation where we don't have an idea of quantity. In one study, a group of researchers had half of the participants eating soup from specially designed, self-refilling bowls. Those who ate from the special bowls consumed a whopping 73% more soup than those who ate from regular bowls (REF).

The main takeaway is this: we suck at estimating how much we eat. Our brains can be fooled by the size of the plate or just not knowing how much we eat, and our stomach are imprecise gauge, which only signals fullness with a delay that might mean too much has been consumed. In order to have control over how much you eat and how sated you feel, eat predefined portions or use smaller dishes to help select the right portion size.

2 - Preventing the “See Food Diet” Syndrome

We are visual creatures. Even more so when food is concerned. Having food in sight (as in on a counter top, or any other visible space) has been shown to promote its consumption, which should not be too much of a surprise to anyone. The good news is that this is true whether the food in sight is highly caloric junk food or healthy foods. So if you want to change your habits, you should also start by changing your space, putting away, or even throwing out, foods you shouldn't eat and replacing it with healthier choices.

Wansink and his team, for instance, went in the kitchen of 200 American women and took photographs of their surrounding. Women who had cereals on the counter, where it could be seen, weighed an average of 20 lbs more, while those who had soft drink lying around weighed 24 to 26 lbs more. And we all know how good cereals are for your waistline! ☹️ Those who had fruits in plain sight in the kitchen however, weighed 13 lbs less. So there is some truth to the "see food" expression after all (REF).

Another, less intuitive, visual tip is the contrast between the food in your plate and the color of the plate itself. So for instance eating rice in a white bowl will prompt you to eat more, while eating the same rice in a red bowl would provide a contrast that stimulate the visual center of the brain to be more aware of how much is being consumed.

The main takeaway for point number two: hide the food you don't want to consume, and put the healthier choices in plain sight. This is especially true if you have kids, as it'll give them good eating habits. Stimulate your peripheral visual cortex with different colors in your plate. You'll be more aware of how much you eat, and you'll also be healthier for it

3 – Respect your physiology

While other subtle psychological cues such as where you are placed in relation to food and in what surroundings you eat it will have a great impact on quantities being consumed, it's also important to consider how the body will affect our hunger.

The major behavioral factor we have control over is sleep patterns. Studies after studies (REF) have shown that alterations in sleep patterns, or shorter sleep duration, will affect our eating behavior and our insulin sensitivity. So not only do you get up with the munchies, but your body is primed to have increased blood sugar, leading to a cortisol spike later in the day.

The more conscious you are of your behavior, the more control you have over it. This is why another thing you can do to control hunger is avoid distractions during meal time and even be more mindful during your meals. This will help prevent overeating beyond normal satiety, as studies have demonstrated (REF).

The takeaway here is to be conscious of what your habits and behaviors do to your body. You might not have full control on your satiety and your hunger, but you have full control on the behaviors that affect them, such as sleep and mindful eating, so take advantage of it!

The mind can greatly affect us in ways we do not suspect. So now that you know those simple tricks to avoid overeating and control your portions, make sure you put them in practice with a healthy lifestyle to get the physique and performance you want without the need to diet.

In health,

Coach Charles R. Poliquin