

How Eating a Cookie Can Help You Lose Weight

For many people losing weight becomes an all or nothing event. You are either on the "diet" eating perfectly each day or you are "off" the diet because you ate something that wasn't on the plan. Does this sound familiar to you? It is very common and is somewhat a side effect from years of dieting. It also has to do with certain personality types that tend to fall into the perfectionist category. Eating a good and healthy diet is definitely part of achieving successful results but it is impossible to be perfect all the time. This is true for everyone- dietitians, personal trainers, movie stars, and models. Trying to be perfect every day will set you up for an unrealistic expectation and can actually sabotage all your weight management efforts. Let's look at an example. Jane is eating her meal plan perfectly every day and then on Monday morning something unexpected happens. She won employee of the month and her boss throws a party for her at work. Wow! What a surprise. They bring all kinds of goodies with chips and even a cake. Jane thinks, well...this isn't on the plan for the day so I guess I'll go "off" the diet. The next day comes around which is hectic because she didn't get much work done the day before so she thinks, well I already went off the diet...I'll get back on track next week when I can focus more. Now that Jane has fallen off the diet it takes 2-3 weeks for her to get back on track. All of the new healthy habits are completely abandoned at this point. This is where weight gain will occur. Not in the one day at work but in the mindset that she has gone off the diet. This also happens when people are traveling for work. They feel like they will go "off" the plan during that time and then focus when they get back home. Do you see the trend? It is important that your new healthy changes become part of your lifestyle when you are at a party, traveling, sick, busy, or any other time to achieve lasting results. The diet mentality is an all or nothing approach but making a lifestyle change isn't all or nothing. It is something that becomes part of your habits and your life with all the circumstances that come up. The second part of this on and off syndrome is that restricting certain foods all together can cause some people to focus on them even more. Research shows that when you omit certain foods from your diet completely it often ends up in a binge because there is a thrill of eating a food that is bad or not on the list. Especially if you have a pattern in your life of that thrill of doing something you're not supposed to. Think back when you were younger. Were you the type who got a thrill out of taking a cookie when you weren't supposed to? Going to a hangout spot when you were supposed to be at a friend's house? If you can relate to this then you may also get a thrill out of eating so called forbidden foods. There are many times that I actually tell my clients it's time to have a treat when they are becoming too tied to the good-food, bad-food scenario. This doesn't mean buy a box of cookies and eat them all week or to have treats everyday. It means going to the bakery and buying yourself a small treat once in awhile, enjoy it with no guilt because you made a conscious decision to have it. So what would happen if all foods are made legal and actually part of a healthy diet? This allows that work party to happen without guilt. Instead Jane can balance her day by saying, "well I ate some not-so-good-for-me foods at lunch so I will have a light soup and salad for dinner and schedule some extra exercise tomorrow." Also, now that all foods are legal the thrill of eating that cookie isn't so strong. Just like when you were younger and your mom gave you permission to have a cookie. It is exciting to get a treat but the thrill of doing something you're not supposed to do is gone. Balance is the key to long term success. One cookie once in while will not make you gain weight but having an entire box of cookies or giving up all your healthy habits for 1-2 weeks will. So, when you feel like you are focusing on the forbidden foods or you are faced with a party, have a cookie (or treat) and enjoy it. Having some treats in moderation will help you achieve life long results more than an all or nothing approach will. (c) 2006, Meri Raffetto

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