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WHY DIETS MAKE YOU CRABBY

By Pauline Wallin, Ph.D.

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WHY DIETS MAKE YOU CRABBY

By Pauline Wallin, Ph.D

Author of "Taming Your Inner Brat: A Guide for Transforming Self-defeating Behavior"

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If you've ever been on a diet you know the feeling of irritability that sets in after a few days. Nutrition experts have attributed this feeling to a physical state of deprivation, such as low blood sugar or dehydration.

While these conditions do have a definite effect on mood, they don't tell the whole story. Consider the fact that you are not ALWAYS crabby when hungry or thirsty, even though your body may be in a state of deprivation.

Diet-related crabbiness stems not just from your body's physical state, but also from mental fatigue. As you know, it takes concentrated effort to change your eating habits. That effort uses up mental strength, which gets depleted.

According to psychological research by Dr. Roy Baumeister and his colleagues, mental strength operates similarly to physical strength. Suppose, for example, you've just spent the afternoon moving furniture. By the time you're done, you don't have much strength left to play tennis.

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In the same way, when you've spent the day exercising self-control with food, you don't have much strength left for controlling your behavior in other situations. Thus, you're more likely to snap back at someone, lose your patience easily, or overreact to minor frustrations.

** HERE'S A TYPICAL SCENARIO:

~ You start off the day feeling OK, determined to stay on your diet. This takes some effort. If you've been used to having a donut or sweet roll for breakfast, it requires effort to eat something different. When you turn on the TV or radio you're confronted with food ads designed to make your mouth water. It takes effort to ignore these temptations.

~ While you're trying to ignore the food ads, the "inner brat" in the back of your mind notices every

single one. It nags at you: "I want that . . . I must have it." Your inner brat's nagging intensifies the cravings. You become involved in a struggle between short-term gratification (your inner brat) and your long-term goal of losing weight. This, too, takes effort.

~ As the day progresses and you continue to resist old eating habits, your mental strength is gradually depleted. This makes it harder for you to keep the lid on your frustration or control your temper. In other words, your inner brat gets the better of you.

~ It's no coincidence that most people end up overeating later in the day, when their mental strength is at its low point. By this time it seems like too much work to resist, so you give into your cravings.

Is it any wonder that most diets fail? They don't have to. To make sure that your moods don't sabotage your diet, here are some tips:

1. Conserve your mental strength. Be selective in taking on unnecessary stressors.
2. Stick to a routine as much as possible. This reduces the number of decisions you have to make, and thereby saves mental energy.
3. Set up your environment so that you avoid temptation:
 - ~ Don't keep junk food at home or in your desk at work.
 - ~ When food-related TV commercials come on, change the channel.
 - ~ At the grocery store avoid the aisles that hold snack foods.

The less you come in contact with reminders of your old eating habits, the less you will need to draw on your mental strength. In these kinds of situations, the old saying, "out of sight, out of mind" is truly applicable.

4. Watch out for negative self-talk. If you find yourself thinking "This is awful" or "I can't stand this" you will only magnify your bad mood. Instead say to yourself, "OK, so I'm not at my best. Just wait it out for a little while longer."

5. Take responsibility for your mood. If you do get irritable, avoid picking arguments. If necessary, involve yourself in a solitary physical task, away from other people. Your bad mood will pass, you'll keep your inner brat under control, and you'll emerge on the other side with additional strength for tomorrow.

Pauline Wallin, Ph.D. is a psychologist in Camp Hill, PA, and author of "Taming Your Inner Brat: A Guide for Transforming Self-defeating Behavior" (Beyond Words Publishing, 2001) Visit <http://www.innerbrat.com> for more information, and subscribe to her free, monthly Inner Brat Newsletter.

Diets, Diets, Diets...Do They Work?

By Mike Yeager

Almost everyone has attempted to follow diets and weight loss programs at some time in their lives. The trouble with so many diets and low fat diets is that they are hard to follow. Some diets leave you hungry and craving food all the time. A healthy diet is one that you feel good about following and encourages you to eat in a healthy way while at the same time reducing the overall calorie content.

When choosing from among the many diets available, keep in mind what your reason is for altering your eating and exercise habits. Do you want to feel better and have some more energy? Are you tired of not fitting into your clothes and that has caused you to consider one of the weight loss diets? Experts agree that it's not good to try and loose excess weight in a quick manner. It's better to take your time and incorporate a package of exercise, proper nutrition and, in general, balance.

As with all new diets, weight loss and exercise plans, it's always best to consult with your physician and have a complete physical examination before starting.

There are many different diets products to choose from. Choose from only the best providers of coral calcium products that offer great prices. That way you'll be guaranteed quality and they can even be shipped right to your door.

Mike Yeager
Publisher

Diets, Diets, Diets...Do They Work?
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How to Lose Weight Without Feeling Hungry, Tired or Deprived

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