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# HOW WHOLE FOODS HELP CONQUER CRAVINGS

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# Diet has a **HUGE** impact on our mental health.

Remember back to Unit 1 when we focused on how food affects our entire body? The chain reaction makes its way from our tummy the whole way to our brain, which means what we eat influences our gut health **AND** our mental and emotional health.

Feeding our bodies, and therefore our brains, with whole foods rather than heavily processed or genetically modified ingredients can significantly improve how we feel. Not only does a real food, nutrient-rich diet improve our brain's overall function, it can diminish some of the emotional symptoms (such as anxiety and depression) that drive us to eat when we're not actually hungry.

## THE INDUSTRIALIZED FOOD TRAP



When it comes to a healthy lifestyle (and relationship with food), heavily processed foods seem to be a de-railer of goals. Why? Because pre-packaged foods like white bread, frozen pizzas, chicken nuggets and sugar-laden snacks are designed to be addictively tasty. *Key word: addictive*

Manufacturers conduct research specifically to determine and engineer which foods tempt consumers' taste buds the most. They spend **BILLIONS** to create the *perfect balance* of sugar, fat and salt in every bite, ensuring that once you pick them up and have a taste, you'll have a difficult time putting them back down. It can be extremely difficult to eat mindfully (and gain control over your emotional eating) if the foods you fill up on are driving relentless cravings.

It doesn't stop there. Over time, your tolerance for these sneaky suckers (sugar, fat, salt) builds up so you need more to feel that same reward, further promoting dysfunctional eating patterns. Basically, the more you eat, the more you'll need (and crave) to reach that over-the-moon bliss point. This stimulation has been compared to what happens in drug and alcohol addiction, **TRIGGERING THE SAME PLEASURE CENTERS OF THE BRAIN**. **EEK!** Just like other addictions, this intense craving doesn't just go away overnight.

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The good news is that it's something that will diminish over time and eventually disappear.

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## THAT'S WHERE EATING A BALANCED DIET COMES INTO PLAY



Unlike ultra-processed foods, whole foods promote a healthy mind. These are the ones that our grandmother's grandmother would have eaten, before processed and pre-packaged was even an option. When you fill your diet with natural, whole foods, **"FEEL GOOD"** brain chemicals (like serotonin and tryptophan) are prompted to stabilize and boost your mood.



Eating this way is the most simple, yet powerful way to enhance your health, minimize emotional eating **AND** combat industrialized food addictions.

## Taking it back to the basics

By taking it back to the basics and focusing on healthier, real food options, you'll be able to further develop a healthy relationship with food and combat your cravings.

### HERE'S HOW...

- Eat fresh **FRUITS** and **VEGGIES** for snacks and with meals.
- Eat **WHOLE GRAINS** (and limit refined grains such as white flour or white rice).
- Add lean **PROTEIN** to your diet.
- Use **NATURAL SUGARS** and sweeteners (such as raw honey, pure maple syrup, unrefined coconut palm sugar and dates).
- MINIMIZE** your consumption of fast food and heavily processed foods (especially bread and most packaged snack foods, like chips and pretzels).
- Make foods from **SCRATCH**.

### TAKE IT ONE STEP AT A TIME.

Rather than attempting to tackle every meal for the week ahead (the thought of that alone is exhausting), choose one or two meals to focus on adding healthier, minimally processed ingredients to. Because they're usually less chaotic, use the weekends to try out and make your new meals. As you begin to feel more comfortable, add another meal into the mix. This allows you to build confidence in the kitchen **AND** gives your palate time to adjust, making the transition smoother.

## LEVEL IT UP.

Instead of focusing on the "perfect" meal, find ways to *level it up*.

- Choose plain Greek yogurt for breakfast and top it with fresh fruit **INSTEAD OF** a sugary, artificially sweetened option.
- Add **MORE VEGGIES** to your pasta dish.
- Rather than a delivery pizza, make a **HOMEMADE** one with whole wheat crust and half the cheese.
- **TRADE** a bowl of ice cream after dinner for a piece of dark chocolate.
- **CONSISTENT, SMALL CHANGES** (by leveling up) lead to a sustainable transformation.

## FLEXIBILITY

Just like we chatted about in other units, don't go in with an all-or-nothing approach. Set general guidelines, but embrace flexibility along the way.

*For example, if you can't find a certain food or beverage with real food ingredients OR a certain food doesn't fit into your budget (such as organic), make the **BEST CHOICE** possible. If your weekend is hectic and there's just no time for meal prep, don't just throw your healthy lifestyle to the wind. Instead, come up with a plan B. It may mean prepping Monday or Tuesday OR eating leftover meals from the freezer.*

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Do the best you can and  
*try not to be too hard on yourself.*

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Make homemade meals whenever you're able to. If the week gets crazy and you absolutely can't, then do your best to make nutritious store-bought choices instead. Keeping a positive mindset and staying flexible will allow you to adapt to a healthier diet and overcome hurdles that stand in your way. That way, you can make adjustments when life throws you curveballs.

Aim to make the majority of the food you eat wholesome, fresh and enjoyable.

There's plenty of evidence that suggests "tasty" convenience foods are partly responsible for depressive disorders (and emotional eating too). Because so many processed foods are now engineered to tempt our tastebuds, knowing what to look for and how to choose minimally processed whole foods is a huge aspect of establishing a healthy relationship with food.

If you feel slightly overwhelmed by the idea of switching from heavily processed food to a real food lifestyle, check out Unit 3's bonus: *"The Real Food Crash Course."* These steps will help simplify your journey and empower you to make the switch.

The key is to nourish yourself with foods that help you **FEEL YOUR BEST** and help **COMBAT YOUR EMOTIONAL EATING** and to eliminate ultra-processed foods that make you feel worse and fuel cravings.

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# LET'S PUT IT INTO ACTION!

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## THIS WEEK (IT'S KITCHEN INVENTORY TIME!)

- Take a gander around your kitchen. Open up the fridge and poke through the pantry. Do you see an array of mood-boosting, whole foods OR highly addictive, heavily processed foods?

What surprised me the most by what I found was...

- Choose ONE or TWO foods to replace this week. Even if you eat the exact same things but consume a higher quality version (like homemade chicken nuggets rather than frozen ultra-processed ones), your body will digest it in a more optimum way. Focus on choosing foods that taste good, pack a nutritious punch and make you feel your best. You know, the ones that grow from the ground (whole grains, beans, veggies and starches), those that grow in trees (fruits, nuts and seeds) and ones provided by animals (meat, poultry, fish, dairy, and eggs), unless a dietary restriction prevents you from doing so.

Fill in the blanks: "This week I'll replace..."

1. \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_

Remember, the food choices you make can impact your frame of mind and level of happiness. Take it one meal at a time. Before eating, sit down and ask yourself the question: **"WHAT WILL NOURISH AND SUSTAIN ME FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS?"**

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**AFTER COMPLETING THIS WEEK'S ASSIGNMENTS,  
BE SURE TO CHECK OUT THE  
BONUS E-BOOK "THE REAL FOOD CRASH COURSE"  
THAT'S INCLUDED IN UNIT 4.**

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