

*Lesson 3: Transcript*

**Cravings & Emotional Eating**

Hi, everyone. Welcome to today's lesson. I am going to start today with a little confession. I absolutely love chocolate chip cookies. There have been times when I have been craving a chocolate chip cookie so bad that I have walked miles out of my way, or maybe I've driven miles and walked a whole lot of blocks out of my way, but I swear if I needed to pick up a car to find a chocolate chip cookie underneath it, I think I could have been able to do it. And here's why - cravings are powerful. You may not have the chocolate chip cookie craving, but you have to have something, and your clients certainly have something that they crave all the time. And here's the deal, I give into those cravings sometimes, and that is key to being able to control cravings and to control the damage that cravings and emotional eating can do.

When you learn to recognize cravings and you actually accept them and enjoy them and include them in part of your nutritious life in a healthy way, they can actually end up helping you lose weight. But let's talk a little bit about cravings and emotional eating. They're sort of intertwined, but they are also separate sometimes. So I'm going to start with cravings.

Cravings are real. It's not just some mean mental trick that your mind is doing to you. I swear no one is trying to get back at you. Your mind isn't trying to be mean to you. I promise you they are actually real, but where they come from is still up for debate. Researchers believe that cravings are a combination of nutritional deficiencies, environment and mood, and habits and behaviors. For example, a nutritional deficiency may be that you're craving a burger or a big ol' steak right around the time you get your period, and that's because during your menstrual cycle you lose iron in your blood, and that may be why you want that big steak.

An example of where your environment and mood might affect a craving is being home on a Sunday night and getting those Sunday night blues. Many of us had it growing up as a child because you knew you had to start school and homework the next day. But for many of us, it still exists. I can't tell you how many clients have told me that they eat poorly on Sunday night, or they go for that ice cream, or they go out for the cheeseburger and fries because they were just feeling, well, a

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little bit bummed out. And some of that is just because it's Sunday night, and that just brings up the memories of, "Well, I indulge on Sunday nights." For other people, it's really the mood. They truly get a little bit bummed out and they're just used to, they're in the habit of going and eating something that they find comfort in.

An example of where habits and behaviors may affect your craving is going into, let's say, your, well, sister-in-law's house. I'm not talking about myself or anything. My sister-in-law loves to have baked goods around and every time I go into her house, I make a beeline for the kitchen. I swear to you, if I was not a nutritionist, I probably would indulge in a dozen chocolate chip cookies if this is not what I did for a living and I did not know how to control those cravings and those environmental cues.

I talked about the big three categories of triggers - nutritional deficiencies, environment and mood, and behaviors and habits. Notice that they kind of all overlap, but everyone has their own individual unique triggers that cause cravings or emotional eating, which we'll get into a little bit more. Think about it. What triggers you to either crave something, or maybe not even realize you're craving it, but just end up eating something? It could be getting off the phone with your boss who was irate with you. It could be going to somebody's house and visiting. It could just be traveling and being in an airport, but in the back of your mind, you subconsciously always over consume because it's an excuse to over consume.

Everyone has their own triggers. So whether it's getting off the phone with your boss, traveling and being in an airport, or whatever else may be your specific trigger, the key is to be aware of it. You need to focus in on that now and think about it. And if you can't write anything down, I promise you, there is something there, but you just need to be mindful of the situation, and over the next few days, week, month, take note and write down your triggers.

Okay, do you have your triggers? Do you know what they are? I hope you're writing them down because you need to know your triggers. Well, now that you know them, or at least that you're going to be mindful of figuring them out over the next few weeks, I want to talk about controls. Controls are how you handle those triggers. And when I talk about controls, I talk about non-food controls and food controls. Let's start with the food controls.

I have a client who is doing amazing. She was eating really healthy, she was exercising consistently, but one thing that came up a lot in her life was how she overindulged when she came home from a trip on an airplane across the country. She traveled a lot from East coast to West coast, West coast to East coast, and every time she got off the plane, even if she'd eaten so healthy on her trip, all she would go for is a greasy grilled cheese sandwich and fries. And you're thinking, "Well, what's the big deal once in a blue moon?" It wouldn't be the end of the world if it was once in a blue moon. The problem is this occurred more often than we would like, and also used to set her up for a whole couple of days of really bad eating habits and just make her feel awful mentally and physically.

Instead of telling her she should order the lemon grilled chicken and a kale salad, and you should be prepared with this or that at home, we decided that it would be better for her to have a healthier controlled conscious indulgence. Instead of the greasy processed cheese, white bread, deep fried french fries and loads of ketchup and salt, we came up with another solution. Our solution was burnt broccoli, so broccoli in the oven, so it gets nice and crispy - satisfied that fry craving. And then we came up with whole grain bread toasted with a little bit of cheddar cheese, real cheddar cheese.

That may not be the biggest, most exciting meal in the world, but here's why that's not what's most important. What's most important is that, that meal satisfied her craving for the grilled cheese and fries. And not only did it satisfy the craving and was it a little bit healthier, but it put her in a much better mental state. Instead of coming home and feeling defeated and then awful about herself for a couple days, she felt empowered knowing, "I can satisfy this craving and give myself good nutrients, and boom, move right on because every meal is a Monday morning, a unique opportunity to eat well."

Here's why that opened face grilled cheese sandwich and burnt broccoli is so important. You need to know your triggers, and then you need to have food controls to combat those triggers, but it's not always about food controls. There are times when really you shouldn't be eating. It's not an eating situation. There's absolutely no hunger and a non-food control might just do the trick. For me, it's about sock drawers. Yes, you heard me right, sock drawers, and here's why. I love cleaning. I love

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cleaning out. When I clean out a drawer, a junk drawer or a sock drawer, it's like candy to me. I feel so accomplished that sometimes that's all I need to get me through a craving.

So as silly as that may sound to you, I am sure you have your own little things that you could do to make you feel good. And here's why that's really important too. It's not just about diverting your attention, it's also about doing something proactive that makes you feel good because, believe me, the second you feel good, you don't want to indulge in whatever it was that you wanted to indulge in as much. And yes, something as silly as a sock drawer can make you feel good.

Another thing I love to do is rewrite my to-do list. I know I sound like a total wackadoo right now, but hey, it works for me. I love writing my to-do list and then crossing things out. I've even been known to write things down that I've done so I can still cross them out. It's just fun, it makes me feel good, and I swear it has saved me from eating a few too many chocolate chip cookies.

You know your triggers, you have a few food controls for those triggers, but you also have to write down a few non-food controls. I already told you two of mine, writing over my to-do list and cleaning out sock drawers. I want you to find yours. Yours may be a little more normal like calling a friend or flipping through the pages of a gossip magazine. Whatever it may be, do something that you enjoy that can divert your attention and hopefully is proactive and makes you feel good.

I have one more thing I want to talk about when it comes to cravings, that is what I call eating around a craving. Sometimes you're just going to crave something, and guess what? It's not related to a nutritional deficiency, it's not related to a mood, it's not related to a behavior or a habit, it's just that you just want something. It happens, and you know what? It's okay. What I tell people, I want you to find the healthiest thing that truly satisfies the craving. If you're craving potato chips and you eat a bowl of cucumbers, in theory, it's a good idea. It's crunchy, they're filled with water, you're not getting all the chemicals that the bag of potato chips might have, but oftentimes, that just leads you to then eat, well, an apple, and then maybe some pretzels, and then maybe some nuts, and then, eventually, a whole big bag of potato chips. So you eventually get to the potato chips, but you've eaten around it and consumed a thousand calories in the meantime.

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Sometimes you just really need to pinpoint exactly what the craving is, and then come up with the healthiest solution to satisfy that craving and indulge in an empowered, conscious manner. I call this a conscious indulgence. Hopefully it is a healthier option, for example, maybe baked sweet potato fries instead of those chips. That's also sometimes hard and not always realistic. A healthier option to the potato chips may be a small handful of salted almonds. Sometimes, though, the real thing is the only thing that will do it. And if that's the case, then you decide, again, in an empowered, conscious manner to have a small portion of it. Have it with a big cup of tea or a large glass of water. Enjoy it, taste the food, don't wolf it down, and move on.

A final piece of info for you on cravings, cravings aren't always about craving a specific food, they're often about craving certain types of textures. For example, if you're craving something crunchy versus something creamy, it may say something different about the mood you're in. When you crave something crunchy, often, you're a little anxious or frustrated or perhaps even angry. When you crave something creamy, just imagine that person in some old sitcom, eating a pint of Ben and Jerry's ice cream because they've broken up with their boyfriend. Because when you crave something creamy like ice cream, it's often because you're sad. Come on, people, grab a cozy blanket, not the pint of ice cream, but it happens. So it just brings up the point that you need to be uber aware of your emotions and what your triggers are.

Speaking of emotions, emotional eating does overlap with cravings, but they do sort of have their own little courses as well. So let's talk a little bit about emotional eating. Just like we need to be aware of our triggers and cravings, we need to be aware of our triggers for emotional eating. Many times our emotional eating situations arise from memories. Memories are supposed to be a good thing, right? And even when they are a good thing, they still could trigger eating. My healthy memory is all about grapefruits. I've even written about grapefruits I think in every book I've written because grapefruits were just happy to me because I didn't even realize it at the time, but they are happy to me, and that they were happy to me, because it meant family time.

My mom made a really balanced meal every night. Wasn't always the healthiest, but it was balanced. Sometimes it was even packaged mac and cheese as the starch, but it was always a balanced meal. I know you're probably thinking that doesn't sound so balanced, but it was always a starch, a protein,

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a veggie, and it always began with half a grapefruit. My mom just did that for whatever reason. I don't even think she knows why she gave us a half a grapefruit every night, but we started the meal with a half a grapefruit, and to me it just signifies being with my family, sitting down to dinner, enjoying healthy foods and enjoying sometimes even indulgent foods. It just meant family and happy times.

I want you to find a memory that is a healthy memory. I am sure you have memories of making seven layer bars and green bean casserole. I'm sure there's some sort of food memory you have, or it could even be that you used to eat a box of cereal when the babysitter didn't make you dinner. Everybody has an array of wacky kind of memories regarding food as a child. It doesn't matter what your crazy memories are, I want you to tap in. Come on, go back. You might even have to go through some old photo albums with some crazy haircuts to find a great healthy food memory, but there's got to be one. And if you're having that much trouble and you just didn't like anything healthy as a child, then you know what? Just find a healthy adult memory. Just create one now.

I want you to then take that healthy memory and put it to good use. For me, with the grapefruit, I take half a grapefruit, I section it, and I sprinkle a little bit of cinnamon and nutmeg on there, and I broil it. I love the way it tastes. It satisfies that comfort food need for me. Don't get me wrong, I indulge in things way more decadent than a grapefruit every once in a while, but for that sort of go-to comfort food, grapefruit is my happy, healthy memory food.

So this isn't even about the specific food. This is about tapping into the emotions that you have that cause you to crave and eat unhealthy types of foods. I want you to go back into history, find that healthy memory food and put it to good use. And then you'll have it right there in your back pocket the next time you're having that same emotion or that same craving for whatever that decadent, indulgent, unhealthy food is, and you'll know, instead of going for this, I go for this.

Another form of emotional eating that's really more related to behaviors is about your everyday rituals that just affect your life in, sometimes, a negative way. I have a client that goes into her kitchen every night around 8:30 after dinner, to go through her mail. She just keeps her mail in her kitchen. When she gets into the kitchen, she starts to pick at whatever is around. It can sometimes

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be her kids' little salty, crunchy crackers. It can be a cookie that was leftover from dinner. It can be her kids' little snacks for school. It could be leftover dessert or even the leftover vegetable from dinner. Sometimes it's not even something unhealthy, it's just the fact that she's going into the kitchen to look at her mail, and she ends up eating from no hunger.

That type of behavior needs to be rewritten. I want you to think about if you or any of your clients have any of those behaviors that affect them on a regular basis, or even if it's once in a while, and I want you to rewrite the ritual. And when I say rewrite it, I don't mean just plan it out. I mean literally write down what you are going to do to change that behavior.

For this person, she loved the behavior of going into the kitchen and looking at her mail there. She liked that it was organized in the kitchen. She said, "There is no way I'm not going into the kitchen. The kitchen is my family room as well. It's where we hang out. I enjoy going into the kitchen. I don't want to move the mail from the kitchen." We had a whole debate about the mail and the kitchen and the mail being out of the kitchen, literally, a 15 minute debate about it.

What I decided to do was have her, instead, rewrite the ritual of being in the kitchen. She goes into the kitchen before she even goes to the mail, she makes a cup of tea. Sometimes even just the act of making tea alone can actually help calm you down. So she made her cup of tea and she bought a whole bunch of wonderful, beautiful camomile teas and mint teas, and then she would sit down, and I said that she first had to take at least five sips of tea before she was even allowed to have a bite of anything. And I said if she had five sips of tea and she still needed something, I said, "Fine, have it."

I wanted her to learn that she could get over that behavior. So she wrote down, "Go into the kitchen, make a cup of tea, have five sips." That was her new ritual. And I didn't put the pressure on her and say, "And you can't have anything else you're having." I figured that would be step two. If she didn't change on her own, we'd work on that later, but guess what? She went into the kitchen, she made her cup of tea, had her five sips, went through her mail and realized she was so deep into her going through her mail that she said, "Oh, I don't even want anything." She'd gotten over it. We rewrote her food ritual.



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Today's webinar has been all about emotional eating and cravings, and recognizing those emotions and cravings, and coming up with controls for all of those triggers, but guess what? There's something else you can do and it's related to your and my favorite topic - food. You can use food to help you build your defenses, so you will have less cravings. Here's how it works.

First, you need to eat consistently throughout the day. When you eat consistently throughout the day, research has shown that you are actually happier. This is why when you snack, you're actually a happier person. Of course, we have to control the amount that you snack and what you snack on, but snacking actually makes you a happier person. When you eat consistently throughout the day, you also control your blood sugar. When you have a controlled blood sugar, you're less likely to be susceptible to all sorts of cravings.

You need to eat adequate calories. Think about it. When you have been on a super low calorie diet, aren't you cranky? Of course, you are. I'm miserable if I miss a meal. I always tell people that I'm on two-hour feedings like a baby. I went on them as a baby, I never went off of them. If I don't eat regularly, I am one angry, mean person. Okay, I don't get that mean, but I'm telling you, you don't want to be around me. I get cranky, and I know most people get cranky and irritable. You need to eat consistently and you need to eat adequate calories.

You also need to eat foods that are going to help control your blood sugar, so you don't want to eat refined sugars that are just going to give you a sugar high and then drop you off and make you tired. You want to eat whole real foods that are loaded with water and fiber volume to help control your blood sugar.

You need to be prepared for when cravings and emotional eating comes up. But instead of just being prepared for that, be proactive about those cravings not even coming up, instead of being reactive to them happening. When you're proactive, you're helping control your mood and your emotions and your cravings, and guess what? You do this all through food.

Omega-3s, those essential fatty acids that we've already talked about, are linked to mood. Researchers even have linked them so much that they even talk about them as acting like antidepressants. 70% of our brain is fat. Remember, Omega-3s are fat. It's no wonder that they are



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so important with helping us control our mood. Think salmon, walnuts, flaxseeds, chia seeds. Get those Omega-3s into your diet to help control your mood. Vitamin C, red peppers, kiwis, berries; vitamin C has been shown to help manage our stress and also protect us from all the oxidative damage that stress causes in our bodies.

Another nutrient I want you to focus on is folate. Folate, which you'll find in legumes and dark greens, is really important for maintaining a healthy mood because people with lower levels of this nutrient were found to be more likely to be depressed.

Another reason to get in your carbs is because carbohydrates help release serotonin, the neurotransmitter that helps trigger those feel good hormones that keep you happy. The reason we want to get complex carbohydrates filled with fiber is because when you eat something like a refined carbohydrate, like a piece of white bread, even though it technically will help you release those feel good hormones, you're also going to have that sugar high and low, so it's going to counteract all of the healthy benefits. We want a nice slow release of happy hormones.

So ditch those unhealthy comfort foods, find controls, which include healthy, happy, secure foods to replace those unhealthy habits and unhealthy comfort foods. And hopefully, I will see you smiling away at the next webinar.