

Module 13, Lesson 1 Handout:

Reframing Willpower into Empowered Eating

The idea of willpower is innately negative and sets clients up to ultimately fail. The scientific consensus on willpower is mixed and even though there are plenty of people still pushing the idea of willpower for behavior change, it's clear that it just doesn't work. And, it's never been a part of the philosophy at Nutritious Life. Just look at the health statistics we've already discussed. Repeatedly resisting temptation is depleting, draining, and depriving - the exact opposite of what you want for your clients. Research finds the energy depleting nature of willpower is one reason why it fails us and studies also suggest our motivational systems just weren't designed for willpower to work. Help clients reframe these negative, resistive thoughts by focusing on Empowered Eating to set them up for long term success.

What is an Empowered Eater? Empowered eaters...

- They plan ahead. They plan ahead by bringing snacks for example and meal planning. They prioritize their sleep and manage stress. In other words, they help themselves by not putting themselves in vulnerable positions.
- Look forward to what they *can* eat. They practice eating healthful foods in the right portions and proportions. And, feeling good putting those foods into their bodies. They think about all the wonderful things good, whole real foods can do for them.
- Listen to their bodies. They become excellent at understanding their HQ and pinpointing cravings. They avoid temptation by not putting themselves in the position of being too hungry, too tired and too stressed out - especially, in the presence of tempting foods.
- Know how to eat a *conscious indulgence* in an empowered way. And, they enjoy doing so!
- Eat consistently. Eat regular healthy meals and snacks and avoid crashes and spikes that come from eating in a haphazard deprived or yo yo way.
- Support themselves. They say things like "I'm really looking forward to that red velvet slice of cake for my birthday." Or "I can't wait to enjoy my delicious glass of wine on Friday night."

Here are steps you can take with your clients to help them reframe their negative thoughts and become an Empowered Eater for life.

1. Point out negativity to your clients. Help them see a new way of looking at their wellness work. If a client always says, "I can't ever resist bread at a restaurant," help them understand if they really are craving the bread, or if they just want it because they think they can't have it. You can then discuss how to fit a conscious piece of bread into their plans, often, once they have the "permission" to have it, they won't even want it after all. Also, explain to her, however silly she may think it sounds, that telling herself over and over that "I can't ever resist bread at a restaurant" is setting herself up for failure. She needs to reframe how she views herself, even if it is a stretch at the beginning. This where telling herself a new story can work wonders. Ask the client to start saying to herself, "I'm the person who drinks a lot of water with my meal and never eats the bread."
2. Come up with new terminology. Terminology that gives your client permission to be human. *Conscious indulgences* sound and feel so much better than giving in or being bad ever did! Think about it in terms of food: "I'm going to consciously indulge and enjoy every bit of this chocolate chip cookie" versus "The cookie won and I gave in to eating it." Can't you just hear the difference in tone?
3. Acknowledge that it's human nature to have cravings. Sweet, salty, crunchy, creamy and specific favorite foods are normal to crave. Your client is not out of control or a failure. He's human for having cravings for these foods. Educate your client on possible reasons for the cravings to help understand and minimize them and discuss ways to fit these foods into their plans consciously and in proper portions and in the most nutrient dense way.
4. Just like everything, practice. Have your client practice and practice some more listening to his body. See if he can really listen to his body and use his HQ. Have him practice not finishing something that isn't as wonderful as it looked and stopping when he is slightly satisfied. Learning to listen to his body can be an incredibly powerful tool - not just for weight loss - but as motivation for other healthy behaviors as well. This feeling of being in control can trigger more healthy behaviors. This is all a part of Empowered Eating.

Ditching the idea of willpower and adopting - and truly believing in - principles of Empowered Eating can take time for a client to get used to and trust. It can be scary for clients to think they *can* eat the cake or the bread or the brownie and still be "on track". Eating less nutritious foods certainly

doesn't make a client "bad" - but that's a really tough concept for many people to believe. Throughout this process support your client and provide the feedback she needs. Over time, the word "willpower" will be out of her vocabulary and her thoughts about food will shift for the better.