

CONTROVERSY: Willpower, Guilt-free, & Moderation

Today, I'm talking about willpower.

You wouldn't have polished off that last Sunday morning donut if you just had more *willpower*, right? *Weakling*.

But, then again, you tried to eat in *moderation*. And anything is fine in moderation, right?

Besides, you had a *guilt-free* breakfast first, so you have no reason to feel guilty, right?...

If all those instagrams, pins, FB videos, and inspirational quotes everywhere online have been fueling you with good-for-you, empowering thoughts, then why are you feeling mentally crappy at 10pm after eating that sliver of pumpkin bread?

I feel strongly that many of the messages we are giving and receiving are, perhaps...broken. Yes, BROKEN.

Are we (meaning those of us who are nutritionists, coaches, fitness professionals, etc.) giving advice that is doing more harm than good, and are those of us who are looking for motivation really paying attention to our sources for inspiration or the true meaning behind the messages?

It becomes almost too easy to repost, regram or regurgitate the sayings you see and hear all the time without stopping to think about what the messages *really* mean. What if you could learn not only the science of nutrition, but also how to *decipher* and *deliver*



your messages and your voice? That's what real education is, and it's also one of the reasons I created the Become a Nutrition Coach Program and why you should know about The Nutrition Life Studio (NLS).

The fact is, social media quotes can sure look pretty, but some of them are doing the exact opposite of what they are intended to do, and it makes me *cringe* when I see some of them.

Here's what I mean.

Willpower

Willpower is a term that gets a lot of positive attention. But, actually, it's a term that is very negative. Have you ever said, "I'm *not* going to eat the cake!" or "I'm *not* going to eat the pasta!" It's all negative energy. Why should we focus so much energy on pushing ourselves to *not* do things? I have found with my clients that this just doesn't work.

For the record, I only learned this from working with clients, not from my degrees! There are some things you just can't learn from a textbook and a professor. Which is another reason I built The Nutritious Life Studio Master Certification - so I can teach you all the stuff you wouldn't learn from a traditional school!

First, willpower can create stress, and we know what that does: Cortisol, a stress hormone, increases. This can cause weight around the midsection and make us crave the worst types of food. If you're "stressing out" about eating the pasta, guess what? You may gain weight without even eating the pasta—due to stress—and likely you're going to end up eating it, too, because cortisol causes you to crave it more!



Focusing on **positive** behaviors trumps willpower every day of the week. I have my clients focus on the CANs: you CAN have the blueberries and a cup of green tea that you love, or you CAN have a small bowl of pasta as a side dish with a big portion of veggies and some lean protein as your main course. Trust me. This works.

This is what eating empowered is all about, and also something I teach in NLS. So, next time you feel like you have to white knuckle it to prove you indeed have willpower, just stop, and remove the word willpower from your vocabulary *and* your instagram feed.

Moderation

“Everything in Moderation” seems like such an accepting way to approach goals, right?

Wrong. It’s way too abstract to be effective. Yet, it’s a concept that is often preached and even taught in traditional school settings.

Ask anybody what ‘everything in moderation’ means to them and each one will give you a different answer. What does moderation really mean, to you?

The first problem with this is that there *are* some foods that should never be eaten. Yes, there are some “bad” foods!

That is not to say you are a “bad person” for eating them, but as an example, fluorescent orange fried things out of a bag are, in fact, “bad” foods! There is no moderation here.



Wine? Technically 2 drinks a day for men and 1 for women is moderation. But my guess is someone would say double that is moderation, or others can justify drinking nothing during the week but as much as they want on the weekends.

Chocolate? Well this depends on other “indulgences” that are eaten and will vary from person to person. For some, a half ounce a day is moderation. For others, an entire chocolate bar in one sitting once a month is moderation.

Broccoli? No moderation. Please indulge more.

I think you get the point.

Moderation is often used as an excuse to do or eat something and, at best, it doesn't mean much of anything.

While the ‘everything in moderation’ mantra sounds reasonable, it can often be used as an excuse to proliferate poor behavior. Better to educate that same client to think about eating empowered and what she *can* eat or learning how many conscious indulgences she *can* work into her plan. It's all about the attitude behind the actual eating of the cookie.

When giving advice on moderation, being specific beats blanket statements every time. Again, a concept anyone who has become Nutritious Life Master Certified is taught.



Guilt-free

“**Guilt-free**” is a master-miserable-motivator. If guilt doesn’t exist in the first place, there is nothing to be free from. In order to learn to never feel guilt around food, we need to stop attaching it even in the ‘guilt-free’ kinda way.

‘Guilt-free’ cookies? Eat this chicken parm ‘guilt-free’? Isn’t that really saying that if we ate it another way we should feel *guilty*?

I know eating ‘guilt-free’ is supposed to be positive, but really it’s just exacerbating *negative* feelings.

If you choose to eat chicken parm, it should be a *conscious indulgence*. Yep, you guessed it -- a big topic I cover in The Nutritious Life Studio’s Become a Nutrition Coach Program. It’s a choice you made to enjoy something delicious that you love, and one that you made willingly from a place of empowerment, knowing you can listen to your body and enjoy a small portion. There is no guilt in that, ever.

And, therefore, changing the ingredients or baking instead of frying, for example, should not somehow make that chicken parm ‘guilt-free’. It just makes it healthier, which is all good in my book.

We don’t feel *empowered* eating ‘guilt-free’. There shouldn’t be guilt in the first place to be *free* from! We feel empowered eating from an empowered place and listening to our bodies. Yes, I talk a lot about that in The Nutritious Life Studio, too.

So, the deal is, just as you put on an outfit every morning, look in the mirror, and figure out if it’s right for your mood and the weather, it’s time to start pondering the same for your inspiration and education.



Where did it come from? Why does it speak to you? Who is sharing it and why do they believe in it?

With so many voices in health and wellness sometimes it's hard to pick out the ones that really resonate with you. **And if you're the one trying to have your voice be heard, are you thinking about what you're putting out there as much as you should? Are you doing it because everyone else is, or because you *really* believe in it? Is your message the one you intend to give, or could you actually be giving advice you don't fully buy into or love, accidentally?**

I'm not here to judge what you are putting out there. I'm here to encourage you to think about what you're giving, and what you're getting.

If you beat yourself up because you have no willpower, perhaps you should feel EMPOWERED deciding that that philosophy doesn't work for you. It doesn't work for me either.

If eating in moderation is something you say flippantly on the outside, but internally you get that twinge of regret when that breadstick hits your lips, then maybe you need to accept that moderation for you may just be an excuse and is causing you to avoid changing your attitude.

And, if you ate 'guilt-free' french toast this morning but you still feel guilty about the piece of cake you ate for your co-worker's birthday after lunch, then guess what? It's ok to remove 'guilt-free' from your vocab. It's not in mine.



And if you're the one posting inspiration about willpower *and* guilt *and* moderation or using these terms with your clients, I'm going to challenge you to challenge me. Why do you believe in it? Why does it speak to your clients and followers? I really want to know, and I'd love to hear your points of view!

Let me know your thoughts on social media, and take a peek at [The Nutritious Life Studio](#). I'm as passionate about NLS as I am about all I discussed here! I want YOU to take YOUR nutrition up a notch, and if you're a professional, I want to help YOU take your clients' nutrition up a notch. Let's do this together.

If you're interested in learning more about my philosophies, want to learn how I educate my clients, you're hungry for nutrition knowledge, and you want to join the outstanding Nutritious Life Certified community AND build your business and brand, then enrolling in the Become a Nutrition Coach Program might be the perfect next step for you.

