

THE HEALTH JUMBLE

A DISTRACTION STRATEGY

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I have a great suggestion to offer you today that will help those of you who struggle with **Mindless Emotional Eating (MEE)**. I call that the **MEE Syndrome** and I'm sure that many of you can identify with this behavior. Mindless Emotional Eating is the cornerstone of weight gain. The key to solving this problem is to become *more mindful* and *less mindless* about the health choices that you make. With that in said, here is an idea that can help make that happen.

I received an email from a desperate woman the other day. She was frustrated over her inability to stop eating candy bars. Snickers candy bars to be specific. She ended her message with the following request. She said, "*Dr. Sklare, can you please show me a way to shift gears when that Snickers candy bar is calling my name?*" Well, never fear - Dr. Sklare is here!

The core of her difficulty lies in the fact that she is fixating on the very thing that she is trying to avoid. And, as research and experience has taught us, the more you focus on something, the more attention grabbing and mind consuming it becomes. What she really needs is a *Distraction Strategy* that will help shift her attention away from her urge to eat that candy bar and interrupt her temporary mental obsession. Her situation brought to mind a creative exercise that I developed years ago for moments just like this when temptation is pounding on your door. I offer it to you today for your consideration.

It is said that, if you can distract yourself for as little as a few minutes, your craving for food will pass. An activity that diverts your attention away from this powerful urge to eat is called a *Distraction Strategy*. Reading a book, taking a walk and listening to music are typical distraction strategies that many people employ. Along those lines, I have an idea for a distraction strategy that will divert your attention, interrupt that burning desire of the moment and help you to focus on healthier thinking. You'll need a pen and a piece of paper for this activity that I call ***The Health Jumble***. Here's how it works.

Let's say, as in the case of the woman above, it's a Snickers candy bar that is relentlessly calling your name. Write the word "*Snickers candy bar*" on a piece of paper and then see how many other words you can create with those letters. For example there's: rice, nice, niece, I, cab, can, earn, be, break and skinny to name just a few. Just approach this exercise as you would the jumble in your local newspaper and see how many new words you can create out of all of those letters.

Then, after you have written as many words as possible, see how many "healthy sentences" or "positive statements" you can make by combining those words. For example, four of the words that I created above combine to create the sentence, "***I can be skinny***"! Now don't misunderstand me because skinny is not the goal – healthy is the goal. This is just an example of how to use the newly created words to create the sentences.

The idea here is threefold: 1) this activity allows you to face and confront your temptation; 2) it provides you with a way to engage that temptation in a safe, healthy and positive way; and 3) by creating the words and developing the sentence, you manipulate, defuse and totally reframe that temptation.

Repetition gives birth to habit. This activity is intended to interrupt that habitual and repetitive cycle of **Mindless Emotional Eating**. The bottom line is this. To successfully manage your weight you must address more than just your body. You must also address your mind. ***The Health Jumble*** will provide you with a distraction strategy that will change the way you respond to temptation by helping you to become more mindful and less mindless about the health choices that you make.

Wishing You Great Health!

Dr. John H. Sklare