

## Sugar is Great?

There's nothing wrong with sugar until you eat it. The only problem I have with sugar is that once I start eating it it could be months, or in some cases years, before I stop. It's not alcohol, it's not cigarettes, it's not drugs, but for me sugar is equally destructive and addictive – mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

I don't know about you, but once I get a taste for chocolate or a lemon curd tart or a friand I can't stop, don't want to stop, I get the taste, the rush, the feelings of heightened wellbeing...the deliciousness is all demanding, urgent and beautiful (yes, I know I've got problems). I want more, I believe I deserve more. I might not have more immediately, but the cycle has begun, and there will be more sugar consumed. I just have to have 'a little more', another treat that I can justify to myself, something for working or training so hard...or because I'm a bit tired or a bit down. If I'm in the addictive cycle the excuses and justifications for another chocolate (ie packet) or tart come thick and fast – and I believe my own excuses, I want to believe them. I fully, knowingly, actively participate in my own addiction. I go to the shop, I buy the chocolate, I put it in my mouth, I usually regret it, I am responsible.

I'm a trainer and an athlete, I love to feel fit and strong and vitally healthy, but from time to time, in moments of weakness, loneliness or stress I reach for sugar; it undoes me. It never resolves or helps my situation. But I reach for it anyway and have done so for a few decades now. I do this less and less these days, but I still do it. Alas.

Sugar depresses me. Sugar fattens and boats me. Sugar sends my energy skyrocketing and then plummeting. Sugar disrupts my hormone balance and sets my PMT wild. Sugar weakens me physically and mentally. Why then do I reach for sugar knowing the destructive nature and cycle of it for me? I think I reach for it because in that moment of consumption it promises and delivers nirvana...that rush of feel-good chemicals...and they feel soooooo good, my brain remembers, demands and yearns for that experience over and over, again and again. Instant gratification... eureka!

Perhaps I missed out on receiving the delayed-gratification gene when God handed them out? Perhaps I am just a slow learner? Perhaps I shouldn't think about sugar and its effects so much? Perhaps learning new behaviours is just hard work that requires patience, persistence and a healthy sense of humour?

One thing I know for certain is that when I am off-of sugar my energy levels stabilise, my mental clarity is enhanced, my motivation is high, my skin clears up, I lose weight, I sleep better, I feel more vitally alive, I suffer no depression, I train harder, I am physically and mentally stronger, I recover more quickly, I feel connected to the universe AND I don't feel the exhausting guilt, shame and remorse that comes from indulging in sugar against my better judgement...

Why would I ever choose to eat sugar, knowing what I know? It makes no rational sense?

When I embarked on a personal weight loss strategy recently (for purposes of athletic competition) my body craved sugar like a caged wild-animal. It was vicious and all consuming, desperate for escape and hungry for a feed. I wanted sugar and refined carbohydrates above all else. The energy

was scary in its power and insistence – a physically compelling, urgent discomfort – I know that I need to harness that powerful energy positively, or it plays out negatively in ALL areas of my life!

To curb the insistent cravings over the last week I ate lean protein (my preference was smoked salmon), steamed veggies and drank water with Vital Greens mixed into it. I would eat 200g of salmon and drink 500ml of water to calm the cravings, to stabilise my blood sugars and to preserve my sanity. I lost weight. I felt energised.

OMG, so often during that first week I cursed how difficult and confronting it felt to eat lean and clean, carb and sugar free. Instead of pushing my emotions down with food I gave myself an opportunity to sit in the fire of my unfounded fears and listen to them crackle and hiss with a wild sugar -fever. But my fears are running a false advertising campaign. They lie. I will not die if I don't eat that chocolate immediately. I did cope without the lemon curd tart. I did not need that friand to reward myself.

My purpose today is to have fun whilst being healthy, happy and of service to others. Almost inseparable to that is to be fit, strong, lean, powerful, creative, energetic, enthusiastic, balanced and well beyond my wildest dreams. Every day I work toward those aims. Some days I do better than others. Some days I fall victim to my sugar cravings, most days I don't.

I have developed (and use) a swag of strategies on a daily basis that keep me on the straight and narrow - toward my dreams and goals for health, wellbeing and my crazy-life of over- achievement and balance (yes you can do both)!

If I falter from time to time, I accept that I am human (and a woman) and that I am ok – no more self-berating. If I'm going to eat sugar I'd better enjoy it, otherwise what's the point? But energy goes where focus flows, so I try not to dwell on my indiscretions for too long, just pick up where I left off with a knowing smile, ready for the next round that the universe has in store for me. It amuses me that I can feel so 'spiritually expanded' in one moment and then act so 'hopelessly human' in the next! Such is life! Such is sugar!