

THE THREE HUGE MISTAKES THAT ALMOST EVERYONE MAKES WHEN THEY TRY TO LOSE WEIGHT.

So, what are the three huge mistakes that Sarah's making with her weight loss attempts?

Let's see if you could pick them.

Huge Mistake #1: Relying on Willpower



The First Huge Mistake that almost everyone makes when they try to lose weight is that they rely on their willpower. When they start a new diet they learn which foods to eat and which foods to avoid, and then they just assume that their willpower will be there to keep them on track when they grab their plate and start heading down the buffet line.

Well guess what? It doesn't work like that. It turns out that willpower is not a loyal friend. It has gaps. Huge gaps. It coughs. It sputters. It leaves the room entirely. It takes the baby and absconds to Arizona.

This is such a reliable phenomenon that I've given it a name. I call it the Willpower Gap. And there's a lot of research explaining why it occurs.

First of all, willpower is actually a thing. (This was a huge discovery; until recently, scientists weren't even sure that "willpower" existed. But it does.) It's a unitary power source inside us, like a battery. When we want to do something, or we want not to do something, it can be called on to see us through. However, if the battery is depleted already, we won't be able to summon the needed power. Typically, when that happens, we unconsciously convince ourselves that we didn't really want to do that thing anyway, or we rationalize that we deserve to indulge in this one-time temptation. In those moments, we have just fallen prey to the Willpower Gap.

Willpower is limited. Scientists estimate that we have only about 15 minutes at our disposal before the battery runs dry. To make matters worse, a whole host of thoughts, emotions, and activities can deplete it. Here's a quick list:

- Resisting temptations
- Persevering on tasks
- Monitoring our performance
- Making decisions
- Regulating our thoughts or emotional responses

The trouble is, we are doing these things nearly all day every day, so there's no way to ensure that our willpower will be fully charged when we need it most. In fact, research shows that the average person spends a total of four hours each day just trying (and often failing) to resist temptations alone.

Want to know what's scary? There is yet another scourge that short-circuits our willpower even faster than any of the items listed above, and it explains why willpower is especially unreliable when it comes to food. Here goes. The horrible truth. Our willpower doesn't perform properly when our blood sugar is low. Yup. That's right. The seat of willpower in the brain, the anterior cingulate cortex, absolutely requires blood sugar for fuel, and any dip below average levels will handicap its functioning.

So ironic. And so cruel. When our blood sugar has dropped and we need to get something to eat, the very physiology of our state at that moment makes it all the more unlikely that we will make a wise choice. Combine that with the constant availability of sweet, highly-processed foods and the difficulty of even finding a fresh, healthy option, and the Willpower Gap helps to explain the current global obesity pandemic that we now face. But it doesn't fully explain it. After all, the Willpower Gap has been around for a long time, but over the past 30 years, obesity rates have skyrocketed. Right along with key changes in our food supply. Which brings us to the Second Huge Mistake.

Huge Mistake #2: Underestimating the Addictive Power of Refined Foods

How do they make cocaine? Any idea?

They take the essence of the coca leaf and refine and purify it into a white powder. Coca leaves are not hugely addictive on their own. Chewing on one will create some numbness in the cheek followed by a mild, 45-minute lift, somewhat akin to drinking a cup of coffee. But in the refined form, cocaine powder is highly addictive.

How do they make heroin? In the same way, except with the poppy plant. They take its essence and refine and purify it into a white (or brown) powder.

How do they make sugar? You guessed it. They take the essence of the sugar cane plant and refine and purify it into a white powder.

Finally, how do they make flour? In this case a number of plants can be used. To make flour they simply take the inner essence of any grain or legume and refine and purify it into a white (or brown) powder.

If you are like most people, the foods that cause you cravings are not in their original, out-of-the-ground form. Odds are that you crave foods made from the ubiquitous fine powders manufactured by the food industry. As Michael Pollan puts it, they're not really foods anymore at all but rather "edible food-like substances."

Foods that are in their whole, unadulterated state interact in the brain the way nature intended. In contrast, "edible food-like substances" made out of sugar and flour release an unnatural flood of dopamine that hijacks the pleasure centers in the brain (the ventral tegmental area and nucleus accumbens) and cause cravings.

This is not a theory. A very large body of scientific research confirms that processed foods light up the very same addiction pathways in the brain as heroin and cocaine. And when food addiction researchers ask people to list the foods that they crave, that they obsess about, and that they eat more of than they planned, those foods fall into two broad categories: sugar products like candy, chocolate, ice cream, cake, soda, and cookies, and flour products like pizza, pasta, bread, bagels, crackers, and chips. It's no coincidence that as the prevalence of refined powders in our food supply has increased, obesity rates have soared. In fact today, 80% of the 600,000 foods available on supermarket shelves are laced with added sugar alone.

But wait a minute. How come your neighbor, and your friend at work, can eat these foods all they want and stay slender? And never (or hardly ever) have cravings? What's up with that?

The unfair truth is that not everyone is equally susceptible to the addictive properties of these "edible food-like substances."

This makes sense, if you think about it. We know that alcohol is addictive, but plenty of people can have a drink here and there, even every day, and never develop alcoholism. Caffeine is addictive, but some folks can have coffee or tea when they want a pick-me-up and

not get hooked. Some people can smoke cigarettes or cigars once in a while and never develop the habit.

In much the same way, many people are just not very susceptible to the addictive properties of refined foods. On the other end of the spectrum, there are people like me who are extremely, outrageously, ridiculously susceptible. And then there's everyone in-between.

Interestingly, rats are like this too. About one-third of rats are simply not very susceptible to addictive substances. One-third are highly susceptible. And one-third fall somewhere in between.

So how susceptible are you?

Before you answer, just know that most people who want to lose weight underestimate their susceptibility to the addictive properties of refined foods. And this leads them right into the lion's den of the Third Huge Mistake.

Huge Mistake #3: Building in Exceptions

Most people think that if they have permission to go off their diet once in a while it will make the whole endeavor of losing weight a lot easier. And most weight-loss programs cater to this belief by incorporating exceptions into the very structure of their food plan. Perhaps they allow for a "cheat" meal once a week. Or maybe a whole "cheat day." Perhaps the program sells little brownies that are "only one point" or provides a list of treats that you should "eat sparingly."

The irony is that building in exceptions doesn't work. It's supposed to make it easier to stick with the diet, but for most people it makes it harder. It keeps your taste buds from learning to prefer real, wholesome food. It keeps your brain from making the changes required for a sustainable shift in behavior and identity. And it keeps you hooked on refined powders—those "edible food-like substances."

Now, to be sure, these built-in exceptions are very effective for some people—the people who are on the "not susceptible" end of the spectrum. When they have a craving for a specific food and then they indulge it, the craving goes away. They eat one serving and no more. Then they go right back to their sensible way of eating and are completely satisfied, often for days. The rest of us watch them do this and naturally expect that indulging in exceptions will work for us, too.

But sadly, for the majority of us, giving in to a craving has the opposite effect—it intensifies the craving. Like what happened with Sarah: one exception leads to the what-the-hell effect and a flood of unrestrained eating. Or maybe nothing quite that dramatic happens, but a few hours later yet another hankering appears for yet another treat. Either way, the reality is that for those of us who are "somewhat" or "very" susceptible to the addictive properties of refined foods, those built-in exceptions don't make it easier to lose weight, they make it harder.

The fact that our society doesn't recognize this is a huge barrier to success for the millions of people who are trying to lose weight and reclaim their health and vitality. By and large, people don't push cigarettes on non-smokers, or alcohol on people who say, "No thank you, I don't drink." Imagine a world in which, when someone says, "No thank you, I don't eat sugar," the host says, "Oh! Good for you," instead of, "But it's George's birthday! One piece of cake won't hurt you."

Where Does This Leave Us?

So there they are. The Three Huge Mistakes that almost everyone makes when they try to lose weight. They rely on their willpower, underestimate the addictive power of refined foods, and indulge in built-in exceptions. What's the root cause of these mistakes? Surely misinformation plays a role. But I believe the more fundamental problem is that most people dramatically underestimate what it really takes to lose weight. This is such a common pitfall that we might as well call it the Fourth Huge Mistake.

Now, to be sure, lots of people lose some weight. But then they gain it right back again. I'm assuming this is not what you want to do. I'm assuming you want to lose all of your excess weight, and then keep it off.

The sad reality is that the odds of doing that are microscopically small. In fact, it is reasonable to estimate, based on a careful examination of the best available data, that only one one-hundredth of one percent (.01%) of extremely overweight or obese people manage to get slender and stay slender long-term¹.

So don't underestimate the task ahead. Losing weight and keeping it off is extraordinarily hard. You probably already know that deep down. How could it be otherwise? There are over one hundred million dieters in the United States alone, and over the years that number has been rising, not falling. If there were an easy way, everyone would already be doing it.

But it is possible. I've done it; I've helped others to do it; and I'm happy to show you how to do it, too. Keep in mind, though, that this method of eating will only work if you are prepared for the task ahead. This is not a solution for people who need it. Lots of people need it. It's a solution for people who want it. So it's time to be honest with yourself: Do you really want to change? Are you willing to do whatever it takes?

¹ The number of successful weight loss maintainers in the National Weight Control Registry is 10,000. Divide this by the number of Americans who were on a diet in 2013, which, according to the 12th Edition of the U.S. Weight Loss and Diet Control Market report is 108 million, and you get roughly .0001 or .01%. Of course there are mitigating factors, which I'm happy to spell out later, but after they are all accounted for this basic figure still emerges.

Where Do We Go From Here?

First make sure you've downloaded the *Taming the Hunger Hormone* report. If you haven't you can do so at <http://ckinghealth.weebly.com/three-huge-mistakes.html>

Next ensure you're registered for the *Balance Your Hormones to Master Your Weight* webinar. I have another special gift that you can download at the end of the webinar on how to bridge the willpower gap that will show you strategies to overcome the mistakes you've learned about today.

Then keep an eye out for my next email when I'll share a happy ending to Sarah's story and tell you about the nutritional science behind weight loss. All you have to do is open my email and the journey will continue.

So, then you'll have three important pieces to the weight loss puzzle – the hormonal issues of weight loss, the psychology of weight loss and the nutritional science of weight loss.

Here's to your best health

Cath King

Seeking Health

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