

Dr. Adrienne Youdim, Host 0:03

Hi, this is Dr. Adrienne Welcome to Health Bite the podcast where we explore all things health and wellness.

This episode of health White is sponsored by Dehl nutrition, a line of functional nutrition bars and supplements I've personally curated to enhance health and well being You can find out more dehlnutrition.com. Hi, there health bite community. Welcome back. As I mentioned in the last episode, I'm taking a shift in our podcast to take a deep dive into our hunger together over the next several episodes we are going to delve into the complicated anatomy, physiology, psychology and spirituality of our hungers. I will draw from evidence-based medicine, scientific research, patient stories and personal stories to help you understand the Universal Science and stories behind our hunger. In the last episode, we talked about the anatomy of hunger, the physiology of hunger. If you haven't listened to it yet, I recommend that when we're done, head on over to health bite and you download last week's episode. In this episode, we're going to talk about emotional eating and emotional hunger and the truth that Like it or not, we are all emotional eaters. The connection between food and our emotions is literally hardwired into our DNA and into our neurochemistry. Consider for example, the fact that oxytocin which is the hormone that signals the release of breast milk in the mother's breasts in response to the infant's cry is the same hormone that fosters a sense of love, bonding and connection between mother and child pretty crazy to consider the way in which emotions and hunger are really connected in our physiology. Sometimes patients will come into my office shaking their heads in shame, admitting that they're an emotional eater and other times patients will come in defiant that they are not emotional eaters. But the truth is, we are all emotional eaters. And this is physiologic. In the many years of doing this work. I have rarely encountered a human whose emotions did not inform their hunger when we think about it. When we are happy we eat when we are sad, we eat when we are lonely, tired, bored, we eat. And as we discussed last week, there are hormones that manage our hunger and respond to food and to nutrients as well as to the amount of fat we have in our fat cells to dictate hunger or fullness or satiety to our brains. Again, if you haven't listened to this episode, head over to health bite after this and download it. These satiety hormones. These physiologic hormones that dictate our hunger, also respond to our emotions. In fact, our emotions literally hijack our hunger hormones. There is research that has shown that when animals are subjected to stress, so they take these poor little hamsters and they put them in a hamster wheel and clog up their water bottles, they respond to that stress with an increase in ghrelin. remember from last week that ghrelin is a hormone that's released physiologically by the stomach, ghrelin levels will go up predictably before mealtime and signal hunger to the brain. When we ingest nutrients or when we eat, ghrelin levels will drop. So ghrelin really responds to food intake. But what these studies show is that regardless of whether or not the animal has eaten stress will induce an increase in ghrelin hormone, that hormone that makes us feel hungry. And the same is true in humans. So let me say that again, stress will trigger the release of ghrelin, which signals hunger to the brain, and prompts us to eat, even when we're not hungry. Even when we're full, it kind of makes you think a little bit differently about the whole emotional eating thing. I mean, who hasn't experienced stress in the past year, right. So there are other ways in which hunger and our emotions are intertwined are connected in our physiology. And in the brain. There's a part of the brain that's called the limbic

system. This is considered the emotional part of the brain. It's the part of the brain responsible for processing emotions. It's also responsible for processing pleasure and motivation, the structures in the limbic system of the brain will respond to palatable foods, aka yummy foods, foods that are high in salt, sugar and fat. The limbic system of the brain will also respond to alcohol, cigarettes, smoking, sex, and other drugs when we eat highly palatable foods. Again, like high-fat foods, we also will trigger the limbic system with a release of dopamine that's that feel-good hormone that gives us the sense of pleasure or sad action when we eat, dopamine also boosts our mood and makes us feel happy in that moment, which is an important point that we'll get to in a minute. But dopamine will also interact with other parts of our brain reinforcing that motivating behavior, reinforcing the positive feelings again, which motivates our desire to eat those foods or to do that activity again and again and again, thereby creating a habit. For example, I share in the book hungry for more the example of a chocolate chip cookie, when we eat a chocolate chip cookie, we release dopamine that feel-good neurochemical in the brain. Dopamine will then stimulate the prefrontal cortex, the front part of our brain, the part of that brain that's involved in thinking in cognition. And in that way, dopamine will signal the thought, Oh, this was good. And I should eat it again, that decision part of the brain that tells us, we should go back for the next chocolate chip cookie. The other thing that dopamine does is that it triggers the hippocampus and the amygdala. These are two parts of the brain that are involved in memory formation, as well as in emotions, and helps record memories and emotional responses to the things that we do. So for example, if your mom happened to make you fresh, yummy, homemade chocolate chip cookies, when you were younger and sad, in order to cheer you up that emotion, that feeling of happiness or love that came from your mom's desire to **cheer you up**, gets recorded as a sweet memory, to the degree that whenever we smell freshly baked cookies, we can conjure up that feeling of love and care. But there's more. So a few weeks back, I had a guest, Dr. Vera Tarman, she was an addiction specialist who spoke to us about the addiction of food. And again, if you haven't listened to this particular episode, you should go back to health bite, it's titled food addiction, truth or fiction. What she says is that dopamine is the chase. Dopamine is a transient increase in response to an activity. So what that means is, you eat the cookie, you get this rush of dopamine, but then the dopamine goes away. It's not sustained. So you go on to chase that feeling by consuming more and more cookies in this example. The other thing that happens with dopamine is that over time, you require or we require more of that stimulus in order to trigger a dopamine release. So with the example of a cookie if it took like a bite or two, to signal a release of dopamine, if we do that over time, then it's going to require more bytes of chocolate chip cookie, in order to get that same emotional reward to get that same release. So again, you can see how our body is kind of levelling up, the need to consume more of these highly palatable foods. And again, the same is true for alcohol. The same is true for tobacco or smoking cigarettes, that over time, you need more of that thing in order to get the emotional payoff. So not only are we super motivated to eat the chocolate chip cookie again, but we need to eat more and more of that chocolate chip cookie in order to get that emotional payoff or reward. So these palatable foods will result in palatable or pleasurable feelings, we become motivated to seek them out repeatedly. And in that way, we create a habit particularly when there's an emotional stress. And we can do this or reproduce the feelings of pleasure by consuming these foods. And that's why some of these foods like chocolate chip cookies like mac and cheese, highly palatable foods have gotten the name or the

term comfort food. And I can't tell you how many patients have come in over this period of stress, as we now are exiting lockdown mode and pandemic telling me that while they never had a sweet tooth before, they're having a really hard time breaking that sugar craving. And this again makes sense when we understand the neurochemistry, the neurobiology behind palatable foods and the habitual behaviours that they promote. Let's get back to that notion of comfort food, right? We call it comfort again, because in that moment, as we've been saying, comfort foods give That's the feeling of comfort. It gives us a feeling of pleasure so that in that moment we forget the negative emotions or feelings and feel comfort instead. But again, that feeling is transient. When we consume comfort foods, we do get this dopamine hit this rush that makes us feel good are comfortable in the moment. But let's carry out what happens after we consume certain comfort foods. We may find that sugary foods makes us feel sluggish or lethargic, or high-fat foods makes us feel bloated or weighed down. And so I really question the notion of comfort food and whether or not we should define it as such, consider a fatty meal consider a sugary meal. It's the same thing. So again, when we have that feeling that desire to Sue's with comfort food, we should again question that notion of comfort. First, it feels like young, but then it wanes. And then as Vera Tarman said, We are chasing after that dopamine hit what's the solution to getting around the dopamine chase to getting around the notion of comfort food. And I have to say that if somebody wants to eat chocolate chip cookies, or mac and cheese, by all means go for it. What I am trying to dispel though, is going after these foods, not because you truly want them out of desire, or out of mindful eating, but when we use them in order to Sue's So what can we do? One thing that I recommend is practising mindfulness. Being mindful around why we're consuming why we're eating is a really powerful antidote to emotional eating. So next time you head over for a bite, ask yourself, Am I really hungry? Or am I bored? Am I tired? Am I anxious? Am I frustrated? Consider downloading an emotion wheel. There are hundreds of emotions and it may help to actually identify and name the emotion that we're feeling. I also recommend a mood log, not a food log but a mood log. Keeping a log of the mood or how we feel when we seek food will help us identify our own patterns. Finally, remember that there are other ways to get your dopamine hit sunshine heartfelt conversation and connection stimulates a rise of dopamine movement, and other healthful behaviours like mindfulness, all-cause a release or trigger a release of dopamine. So remember to question the notion of comfort food and consider alternate strategies for that dopamine hit. Okay, that's a wrap. Thanks again for joining me this week to talk about emotional eating. I hope that you enjoyed it, I hope that it was a value. If you love this episode, please show your support by liking and sharing with friends. I also want to remind you that launch date for hungry for more is around the corner. You can go to hungryformore.net and download an excerpt of the book right now. You can also pre-order on Amazon for ebook Kindle version, ebook, paperback and hardcover will all be available June 15 2021. Thanks so much. I can't wait to see you again next week. Bye.

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