

3

QUESTIONS

*that will help you end your eating
problems*



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Introduction

There are 3 questions that everyone who has eating problems should ask themselves.

Here they are:

1. Do you find your cravings overwhelming?
2. What do you normally eat for breakfast?
3. Do you ever eat in secret?

In this PDF and the videos it links to, I'm going to explain why these questions are so important, and how they can actually start to liberate you. If you are sick of feeling overwhelmed and inadequate around food, what follows could be the hidden doorway that leads to the secret garden of freedom from food misery.

My Story

From the age of 12, when it suddenly hit me like a lightning bolt that I was fat (NB I wasn't fat – in retrospect I can see I was just reacting badly to the normal changes of adolescence), I was always unhappy with my weight. I followed numerous diets, detoxes,



fasting, punishing exercise regimes – you name it, I tried it. Some worked temporarily, but none had any lasting impact – except to embed the idea that I was a fat, willpower-free zone.

I was also a compulsive eater. I used to steal my kids' Easter eggs and tell myself I was looking after their dental health. Even moderate stress became a regular trigger for trips to the deli (or should I say dealer) to get my fix of fat and sugar. I used to regularly wolf down half my daily calorie needs in less than a minute - all in shameful secret, of course. I was never able to fully concentrate on conversations at parties, or shows at the theatre – all because at the back of my mind and an insistent voice kept whispering “FOOD”. I thought about it constantly, except when I was eating...or should I say inhaling.

Two things woke me up from this. The first was reaching 13 stone 9 (191lb) after having a baby. This was not much less than I'd weighed when I was nine months pregnant – carrying a baby that weighed 10lb 2oz, no less!

Most slimming methods focus on the body, but I knew that my mind was the key to helping me shapeshift. I started reading up on this, and using a mass-market book & CD, lost 20lb – half of which I regained. I then coasted along in a kind of fat-but-in-denial mind fog until I turned 40. This was when I really decided that I'd had enough. I was looking at middle age; middle-age looked back, and really didn't like what it saw!

I also knew instinctively that the mass-market book and CD were of limited use purely because they weren't personalised and tailored for me. I realised that I had to be my own mind-weight loss expert. It was time to get curious and creative.

My curiosity and creativity have allowed me to come up with some powerful practical strategies to change my eating and exercise habits in ways that empower me, instead of making me want to rebel. In essence, I sat down and had peace talks with my food compulsion – while tying its shoelaces together under the table! This has not always been easy – what big life change ever is? – but it has been easier and far more empowering than the endless yo-yo dieting and weight loss/weight gain vicious circle I used to endure.

I am a fully qualified eating psychology coach. I trained with the Institute for The Psychology of Eating.

The Questions...and Why They Matter

Question 1: Do you find your cravings overwhelming?

Which of these 2 statements is true?

A - Einstein played the trumpet badly

B - Einstein never had an eating problem

The answer? Well I can tell you that A is definitely true.

As to B, I have no idea.

But I would like to think that this is also true.

To see what I mean, and why Einstein holds the key to dealing with any kind of craving, watch this video:

<http://www.theshiftinside.com/einstein-and-cravings/>

Why this question matters: The accepted way to deal with cravings is via willpower, something that is chronically overrated in our culture. It seems to be in short supply, except for those special few who achieve massive success. (It becomes especially annoying when this minority write books or give talks praising the virtue of determination, perseverance and never giving up. These are all great *descriptions of success*, but **they do nothing to help us get where we want to be**).

What you need are *practical strategies* to use even when you feel overwhelmed by compulsive feelings around food). Channelling that compulsive energy through Cravings Busters beats willpower any day, hands down. And the best thing is it gives you a confidence boost, a triumph to build on.

This text message to a friend in July 2012:

I just have to tell you I am in the dessert aisle and I really want chocolate but I will walk away. Text you in 5 min

was the first step that led me to a life 90% free of the fatigue, mood swings, PMT and irritability – the sidekicks that always hang around chocolate. If you'd have told me on that day that I would never eat chocolate again, I'd have laughed in your face. But that is in fact what happened – because I rejected willpower and took a no-commitment, baby steps approach.

Question 2: What do you normally eat for breakfast?

Why this question matters: binge and compulsive eating, junk food cravings and other forms of eating chaos are often partly down to an unbalanced breakfast.

The fact is that the human body is designed to do most of its activity in the daytime - this is a throwback to our cave(wo)man ancestry. Therefore, in the first half of the day, we require a greater range of nutrients than the average carbohydrate-heavy breakfast can provide. For example, one of these nutrients is protein.

Now if you insist on giving your body low-quality fuel in the form of, say, breakfast cereal (which is unbalanced in favour of carbohydrates) or half a grapefruit (ditto), then your body will let you know. However, your body is not a sophisticated enough communicator to let you know specifically that it could have really done with an egg this morning. Wouldn't it be great if we could just start craving what we actually need?

In the real world, your body will start screaming not for that egg, but for the nearest source of energy - and it wants it yesterday. The hideous irony of this is that this often turns out to be your favourite junk carbs which give the body a quick hit of energy.

Enter sugar cravings stage left, mowing down any resistance.

For many of my clients, foods like sugar are also what I call **Mood Hijacker Foods** - they bliss you out temporarily, but the price in terms of irritability, fatigue, PMT and brain fog is daylight robbery. However, it is not my clients' bank accounts that used to get drained, but *their whole quality of life*.

The great news here is that you can prevent the junk food cravings by eating the opposite of Mood Hijacker Foods - **Mental Rescue Foods** in the morning. These contain those nutrients like protein, but in a tasty form.



My favourite is sugar-free chocolate smoothie.

Sugar-free Chocolate Smoothie Recipe

Ingredients:

Between 1 teaspoon and 1 tablespoon protein powder and/or 1 tablespoon ground almonds

Half to 1 tablespoon cocoa

500ml Milk (cows' or any alternative)

2 pears

Extra fruit that you like (bananas, peaches, mango, strawberries for example)

Optional : orange flavouring

Method:

1. Chop up the pears into small pieces, removing the centre. Heat in the milk and simmer until the pears are soft.
2. Put the milk, pears and all other ingredients in a blender and blend.

This freezes well, so you could make a weeks' worth in one go if you like.

Play around with quantities - experiment. I found the particular protein powder I use quite bitter, so I increased the cocoa, and this reminds me of very dark chocolate from my old chocoholic days. Then I got used to the protein powder, and started upping the amount from a teaspoon to a tablespoon. The extra protein is really psychologically grounding, and calms me down on mad Monday mornings!

This smoothie is great because you don't even need to eat breakfast if you are not naturally hungry first thing. Even if I am immersed in doing something creative in the mornings and have lost my appetite, I can still sip my smoothie.

See how a Mental Rescue Food like this affects your eating later on in the day.

Until someone invents a Breakfast Time Machine that can yank you out of your 4pm binge and take you back to your first meal of the day, *your work here is around prevention*.

Question 3: Do You Ever Eat In Secret?

If you ever eat in secret, this indicates you feel guilt or shame about it at those times.

I am about to show you why this entirely inappropriate guilt is actually the doorway to freedom from the food prison you inhabit. And don't worry, I won't be asking you to plaster some wishy-washy fake positive thinking over your very real discomfort.

We have far more powerful psychological tools at our disposal.

How to Start Dismantling Guilt Around Your Eating Problem

I would like you to meet someone.

Someone who holds the key to liberating you from the entirely inappropriate and toxic guilt you feel about how you eat.

That person is you – or at least part of you.

Their name is Sabotage You.

Watch this video to find out more:

<http://www.theshiftinside.com/who-is-sabotage-you/>

Some Different Ways Sabotage You Can Show Up

- Binge eating
- Any behaviour around food that is defined as throwing the towel in
- Breaking any rules you set for yourself
- Sugar or any junk-food addiction
- Stopping yourself do anything because you decide you are "just too fat/old/out of shape" etc etc

Why You Let Your Sabotage Self Take Control

There is no uniform answer to this question - it is unique to everyone.

However, there are some common reasons that this part of our minds can undo all your good work with your eating and exercise when you are looking the other way. In each case, your Sabotage Self is so powerful because she is invisible, and you don't understand her very well meant disruption of your best-laid plans. Once you understand why she is ruining your life, you can stand up to her. Each section below will explain things from her point of view.

1. Airbrushed Perfectionism

This is my term for the ridiculous notion that pervades western culture: *when it comes to our looks and body shape, if you are not a supermodel, you are not good enough.*

Imagine spending 50% of your time hating your home because it is not a palace. Imagine tearing up a child's painting of their doll because it wasn't worthy to hang in The National Portrait Gallery. Imagine buying a car, and when it breaks down deciding it's all your fault - that you are a terrible driver who shouldn't be allowed on the roads?

These are all ridiculous overreactions to the perfectly natural *imperfectionism* of life, but when it comes to beauty and weight, this is how we treat ourselves – and all because we are human and fail to live up to the super harsh physical dictates peddled by the beauty industry.

Your man/best friend tells you you look nice and Sabotage You dismisses his compliment, citing your massive thighs as evidence for the prosecution. You try on that beautiful flowery dress and she is there again, with a swift put down at the ready ("Don't even think about it. Any colour except black makes you look like a beached whale").

How Sabotage You Thinks She Is Helping You

What Sabotage You is doing in these examples is (in her eyes) keeping you safe from the criticism that she thinks will follow. *Your man can't have meant that compliment, so*

best nip the snide looks you would get if you wore that dress tonight in the bud right now. Big girls can't get away with bold prints. Someone will find you out soon enough.

And it's all a massive lie. Sabotage you has got it badly, badly wrong. The truth is that what one person considers too big is gorgeous and curvy to another. The work is wearing that dress anyway and proving to her that it doesn't matter what some people think.

The good news is that there are practical ways to take back control from Sabotage You, not to mention the beauty industry. Do you really want your sense of self to be dependent on the say-so of an industry with super harsh standards? Is your self-esteem really with sacrificing at the altar of their profits?

There is another way. Have you ever seen a woman who you might call curvy, who carries extra weight, who is not by any stretch of the imagination slender - but she is relaxed in her skin. She owns her curves, and she lives in bold prints. And men love her. Not all men, but with 3.5 billion on the planet, she has more than enough admirers.

This woman has rejected airbrushed perfectionism and told her Sabotage Self to go sit at the back of the bus because her new empowered self is now in control.

You can be that woman.

2. Fear of success

Much has been written about the fear of failure, but far less well known - and far more insidious - is the fear of success.

How Sabotage You Thinks She Is Helping You

The brain finds any change a challenge, because its most important goal for you is survival. It doesn't care that your binge eating makes you miserable, all it knows is that you live to see another day with binge eating as part of your life - so why stop? Sabotage You sees itself as the let's-keep-things-as-they-are police force.

But you don't have to kowtow to her rules and regulations anymore. Much of the work I do with my clients involves consciously identifying the toxic PR that their Sabotage Self has been spinning for years, then helping them standing up to it. This is not always straightforward, but it IS immensely liberating. Oh yes, and it can end your binge eating and help you shed weight.

3. A Cry For Pleasure

In my coaching practice I help my clients stabilise their relationship with food so it gets closer to that of people with no eating problems. One of the main characteristics of such 'natural eaters' is that they find food pleasurable, but not so much that it becomes their chief source of pleasure.

How Sabotage You Thinks She Is Helping You

Evolution has designed us to love activities that ensured our ancestors' survival (eating, sex, sleep etc). Sabotage You sees you getting pleasure from that sugar hit on a daily basis, and is loathe to try a new way. But she is clear that you **MUST** have enjoyment - the need for pleasure is in your psychological DNA. For many of my clients, the work is weaning them off the distorted hyped up pleasure from the sugar hit or the intense binge, and teach them to get savour and enjoy food.

Success no longer carries a price tag of deprivation, because you **CAN** teach yourself to eat in a (mostly) natural way. The key is repetition, repetition - and yet more repetition. Once Sabotage You sees that the mood balancing, energising chocolate smoothie is here to stay in your morning routine, she will shut up and let you have it. The resistance and cravings will lessen - but you need to hammer the point home. The reason that I offer clients daily check ins via Skype or phone is that it takes a while for her to shut up, and you need extra support while she is kicking up the inevitable fuss.

I always have to think about food more than someone who was born a 'natural eater', but I am too busy feeling liberated to compare myself to them. I compare myself instead to the old, addicted and diminished version of Harriet who was overweight, bowed down by body shame, constantly tired – not to mention irritable - and had truly evil PMT.

Alchemising your self-sabotage from proof positive of your supposed defectiveness into a misunderstood force within you that is trying misguidedly to help you is the key to liberating yourself from your binge eating, junk food addiction and compulsive behaviour around food. Changing how you eat is no longer a battle you wage against yourself, but a peaceful but firm stand against that disempowered part of you who you know just wants to help you - she's just got the wrong instruction manual.

Final Words

These 3 questions are a springboard to start you on the road to reclaiming your life from your eating problem. Think about them, and journal your thoughts. Insights may come to you over coffee next Tuesday at 10am.

There is no universal truth, but there are ideas you can make your own, and practical tools to divert Sabotage You, even when you feel utterly compulsive.

If you are interested in one-to-one coaching, I invite you to apply for my Reclaim Your Life From Food programme. Please be aware that because the most effective work happens with a high level of personal support from me, I only ever have a limited number of individual clients and do not accept everyone who applies. This work is far more powerful than the traditional weekly session that you may have experienced with other coaches.

To apply, visit <http://www.theshiftinside.com/coaching-application/>