

Doctors Report 'Brain Hijack' Causes Overeating-Here's How to Overcome

Have you ever heard of "brain hijack"? By the end of this message, you will know what it means and why it's the real reason you overeat.

Why is this such an important issue, especially for Christians?

1 Peter 5:8 warns us: "Be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

The information you are about to learn shows you how certain types of foods interfere with your ability to be sober, watchful, and focused on the purpose to which God has called you.

Scientists once did an experiment on rats to determine the nature of drug addiction. They trained the rats to press a little bar and they would receive a small dose of cocaine.

At first, the rats would press the bar just a few times a day. Eventually though, the rats became so addicted that they would press the bar dozens of times a day, even forgoing food and water just so they could get their fix.

The scientists discovered that when the rats received the drug, it lit up the brain's pleasure/reward center, the nucleus accumbens. When this area of the brain is stimulated, it naturally makes you feel good.

However in this case, the brain was lit up for a dark purpose—drug addiction. The term "brain hijack" describes this process.

If you are currently binging on food, then you too are suffering from “brain hijack.” It is most likely that your brain is sensitive to sugar. When you overeat, you are lighting up your brain’s reward center—but it’s ultimately for a dark purpose.

It didn’t start out that way. Just like the rats, all you wanted was to feel good. You made the connection that high-fat, high-sugar foods make you feel good.

But soon, your brain’s pleasure center was hijacked and, in spite of logic and the Holy Spirit’s warning, you found yourself unable to stop.

John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” You know logically that overeating consistently causes you to gain excess weight, which will ultimately destroy your health. However, overeating is not logical; it is emotional.

That is why it is critical that you learn to secure your emotions with God’s truth. The Bible says:

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any (1 Cor. 6:12).”

In other words, you can eat anything but you shouldn’t eat everything—especially if you know a particular food is not helpful to you.

So how can you take your brain back? You have to re-train your brain to seek other sources of pleasure besides food. God built the nucleus accumbens for a good purpose—it enables you to enjoy life but in ways that are good, not bad for you.

Here are four ways you can start to take your brain back:

1. Prayer. Your first line of defense is to ask the Lord in prayer for help. In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus said that you

should pray not to be led into temptation. So before you start your day, pray “Do not lead me into temptation, but deliver me from the evil one” (see Luke 11:4).

2. Remove temptation. Say this statement out loud: “The best way to win a fight is to avoid getting into one in the first place.” It is a principle from the martial arts. The martial artist only fights when she has to; she doesn’t go around picking fights to prove how big and bad she is.

In a similar way, you know which foods trigger your binges. Stop picking fights with them. Get them out of your house, your desk or wherever you keep them. Stop leading yourself into temptation.

This is different from forbidding yourself to have certain foods. When you tell yourself you will never have a food again, all that does is activate the rebellious (sin) nature within all of us.

Instead, you tell yourself that you are making a wise, empowered choice to remove yourself from harm.

It is no different from a person deciding not to eat a food to which they are allergic! Does a person really have to fight with themselves not to eat a food that they know will make them itch, swell up or cause sickness? I don’t think so.

Is it a food that you think you can’t live without? Are you thinking you will die if you don’t have it? That is a serious warning sign that this food has power over you. The enemy has likely set up a stronghold in your mind. You need the Holy Spirit’s wisdom and power to get free from it. And you need to be diligent to take such thoughts captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

Here’s another tip. When you prepare your plate, look at the side of your fist. The human stomach is naturally that size. So fix your plate to be an appropriate size to satisfy your

body's hunger only. If you overfill your plate, you will be tempted to eat it all—whether your body needs it or not. So avoid the fight by controlling your portions.

3. Build pleasure into your daily life. Here are some activities that also light up your nucleus accumbens, but in healthy ways. These are a NECESSARY part of your healing, so take time for them daily.

Take them as seriously as you would a prescription from your doctor:

- Good music (especially praise music)
- Laughter (funny movie or clean joke book)
- Massages or using a foot roller
- Warm baths or showers
- Body stretching
- Dancing
- Learning new and interesting things
- Sex (marrieds)

I suggest making a list of other things that have brought you healthy pleasure in the past. Then get creative as to how you can introduce them back into your life.

4. Praise. Play praise music that you love. When I do it, my brain starts feeling good worshipping the Lord. I'm lighting up my nucleus accumbens. By the time the song is over, the urge to eat is no longer there. I just took back my brain!

Depending on how long your brain has been hijacked, it may take time for you to take it back. But, this work is not optional. You want to obey the Biblical directive not to be brought under the power of those things that harm you.

Remember the wise words of Jesus: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work (John 4:34)."

May God bless you as you seek to do His will in every area!

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