

Here's Some HELP for Resisting an Old Temptation

Snowflake-shaped sugar cookies, coal-black chocolate cupcakes, Rudolphins made of Tootsie Rolls and Reese's—halls everywhere seemed to be decked with more havoc-wreaking holiday treats than holly!

As a CrossFit coach and health writer, I hear a common refrain throughout this festive—or should I say *feastive*—Christmas season, one that isn't part of a classic carol or heartwarming hymn. It goes like this:

"I can't stop overeating!"

The temptation to overeat has been around long before gingerbread and figgy pudding. (And if you know what the latter is, please fill me in.) We can look back through the pages of history for evidence of this. Take, for example, Eli, the high priest of Shiloh and judge over Israel 900 years before Christ's birth. First Samuel 4:18 seems to attribute his ample weight to the sudden cause of his death:

"When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years" (NASB).

Henry VIII, who reigned in England from 1509 to 1547, is also remembered as a corpulent fellow. His waist measurement was recorded as 54 inches. He was so large, in fact, that he relied on mechanical inventions to help him move around. He died at the age of 55.

On this side of the pond during the 1920s, President William Howard Taft was known to have obstructive sleep apnea due to his 350 pounds. He also had severe hypertension with a

systolic blood pressure of 210. Within a year of leaving the presidency, however, he shed approximately 80 pounds, which caused his systolic blood pressure to drop significantly. Without a doubt, this drastic weight loss helped extend his life. With renewed vim and vigor, his love for the outdoors was restored, leading him to explore and enjoy the final frontier of Alaska.

According to research conducted by the Barna Group, 55 percent of Americans today struggle with the temptation to overeat. And while I can't say for certain how that percentage rises between Thanksgiving and the New Year, I'm sure it does so like a tidal wave! In this article, I'm going to offer four tips, some "HELP," for resisting the age-old temptation to eat one more slice of ham or apple pie than you know you should.

H—Have a plan. "If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it" (Prov. 25:16, ESV).

I often equate Christmas parties and heavily decked out homes (mostly homes of grandparents who spoil their grandkids too much!) with Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory: filled from floor to ceiling with all things edible and utterly irresistible. And just like Mr. Wonka's wondrous candy land, negative repercussions occur if we don't rein ourselves in from the taffy trees and chocolate rivers.

Before you walk into your next Wonka-like environment, form an offensive battle plan so that you're prepared to face those innocent, adorable, delectable-looking foes awaiting you. The first thing to decide is whether or not you're going to indulge in dessert. If the answer is no, then resolve to politely decline when your host or hostess offers you a tasty truffle or gooey fresh-baked brownie. (See tip No. 4.)

If the answer is yes, then tell yourself you'll only have a small plate occupied by your must-haves and that you won't go

back for seconds. Researchers at Cornell University concluded that when people are given smaller portions of snack foods, including chocolate chips, apple pie and potato chips, they feel just as satisfied as individuals given larger servings. And if you have the choice, make it a white plate. Spanish researchers found that participants who ate desserts from white plates found their sweets more satisfying. The researchers reasoned that white complements the colors of vibrant foods, making them seem even easier to enjoy and savor.

No matter the size or color of your plate, the key to victory in Wonka factories is self-control. Like Solomon wrote, “Eat only enough for you.” The emotional weight of guilt and the physical weight of added pounds during the holidays simply aren’t worth a second trip through the dessert buffet.

E-Enlist encouragers. “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Prov. 27:17, ESV).

According to the Barna Group, most of the ways people say they resist temptation are fairly individualistic; only 4 percent of people say they talk to or call someone else when they are tempted and a mere one percent say they seek the company of others or attend a meeting. Many times, relying on our own willpower just isn’t enough when it comes to resisting temptation.

Whether you’ve set a weight-loss or maintenance goal for yourself or perhaps struggle with food addiction and binge eating, now is the time to ask close friends and family members to keep you accountable. Keep a daily food journal and email or text it to a friend. Before an event, let your friend know what your game plan is, then ask him or her to check in with you to ensure you stuck to it. When you feel tempted to eat the left-over cookies from last night’s Christmas party, call another enlisted encourager to go for a stroll with you, hit the gym, or grab coffee instead.

It's much more difficult to deviate from your plan when someone who cares about your success as much or more than you do is cheering you on.

L-Lean on the Lord. "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9, ESV).

As I mentioned earlier, the temptation to overeat is a major weakness for 55 percent of Americans. With 160,000 fast food restaurants serving 50 million customers daily throughout the nation, that fact is hardly astonishing. Research from the Barna Group shows that most Americans (59 percent) don't do anything specific to avoid the tempting situation, whether it's overeating or viewing pornography. However, practicing Protestants and practicing Catholics stand in contrast to this trend. A majority of both groups indicate they attempt to stand up to temptation. The most common way they claim to do so is by praying and asking God for strength.

Jesus Christ invited His followers to come to Him when we feel weary and heavy-laden. First Peter 5:7 tells us to cast all our anxieties upon God because He cares for us. It doesn't matter how trivial or insignificant our weaknesses and worries seem. There is not a minimum weight requirement that needs to be met before Jesus can carry our burden. He longs to help us have victory over all things, including the food we eat.

James 4:2 says we don't have what we want because we don't ask God for it. Perhaps what's missing in your battle plan is a meeting with your Commanding Officer. Ask Him to grant you the weapons, fortitude and back-up needed to overcome any of life's temptations, including tiny ones dipped in chocolate or topped with sprinkles. You will be amazed at how faithfully He provides a way out.

“God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Cor. 10:13, ESV).

P—Pass it up for the glory of God. “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31, ESV).

This verse says it all. There is no gray area when it comes to glorifying God. Either it does or it doesn't. Therefore, every time you stick to one serving of “honey,” as Solomon wrote, you're glorifying God. Every time you pray and ask the Lord to give you the strength to stick to your plan, your success pleases and exalts Him. Knowing that even these seemingly minor acts of obedience magnify our Maker can make temptation easier to resist.

However, when you've made a firm decision to lose weight or even alter your eating habits to become a bit healthier, you may find it tough to say no to your grandma's famous broccoli and cheddar casserole or your mother-in-law's lasagna. Sometimes it seems that those closest to us can be the most unhelpful. “Have another helping. I insist!” “I made plenty! Take these left-overs home with you!”

I read this quote recently: “‘No’ is a complete sentence. It does not require justification or explanation.” Other than perhaps adding a “thank you” to the end of that sentence, I wouldn't change a thing about that statement. Often when we try to explain why we don't want another brownie or heaping helping of lasagna, we open the door for arguments, even discouragement if the person pressuring us finds our goals silly or our efforts futile.

Politely saying “No, thank you” is all you need to say to keep the peace and banish the temptation.

Stay fit, stay faithful.

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