

Why 'Just a Little Sugar' Hurts You More Than You Think

"If I gave up sugar, I wouldn't have anything to eat." As I looked at the woman speaking to me, the truth of what she said was obvious. "Besides, just a little sugar never hurt anyone." She was blind to what it was doing to her. She wore it on her body like heavy baggage she never wanted to let go of.

I knew exactly where she was coming from. She could have been me in the past. I weighed over 430 pounds for years, and it felt like reworking my entire way of eating would be impossible.

My mindset was like that the big food manufacturers: A spoonful of sugar makes everything taste better. It's why sugar was Grandma's secret ingredient in almost every recipe. It's why food manufacturers put it in almost everything that is canned or prepackaged.

How Much?

When I finally realized I was a sugar addict, my entire mindset changed. I no longer saw sugar as some innocent thing we are obligated to give our children to make them happy. The scales fell off my eyes and I saw it as a tool that the lying, manipulating enemy of my soul was using to steal, kill and destroy my life, my influence in a dying world and the very destiny assignment He has for me. I also saw that I did not have to be a victim to it. Instead, I could be a victor over it with God's help.

Remember the cute Mary Poppins' song with the line, "A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down in the most delightful way?" So, I wondered how many grams in a teaspoon of sugar. There are four grams, but most folks don't stop with one teaspoon and many use tablespoons, which would hold 12.5

grams of granulated sugar.

Wait, though. A cube of sugar is the same as a teaspoon of sugar. So let's load up a tablespoon with sugar cubes. There are at least 10 cubes in that tablespoon. That makes 40 grams of sugar in that one spoonful, more than the recommended daily amount for both men and women!

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), the maximum amount of added sugar a woman should eat in a day is 25 grams or 100 calories and men should only eat 37.5 grams or 150 calories (*Added Sugars*, American Heart Association).

America's per capita consumption of sugar is 94 grams or 358 calories! No wonder two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese. That's almost four times the amount recommended for women.

Prepackaged Foods

When I began my extreme weight loss journey, I became a label-reader, desiring to eat sugar-free and also artificial sweetener-free, except for pure stevia, monkfruit and natural fruit. When I really started looking, it amazed me the amount of packaged foods that have sugar added to them.

Here are some statistics from *Prevention* and others: 10 gummy worms have 43 grams; Milky Way candy bar, 36 grams; grape juice unsweetened, 35 grams; 12 oz. can of soda, 33 grams; blueberry muffin, 15.5 grams; fast food double-cheeseburger on bun, nine grams; plain cake donut, 8 grams; spaghetti sauce, 1/2 cup, 7 grams; 1 T catsup, 4 grams; 1 tablespoon of French dressing, 2.5 grams; 1 cup of canned chicken broth, 1.3 grams.

What Harm Does Sugar Do?

It's important to know how much sugar we consume. It adds because zero nutrients and many added calories. Consuming those extra "fluff" calories, though, will eventually add

obesity, heart disease and diabetes to our lives, according to the AHA.

Nancy Appleton, Ph.D., lists 76 ways sugar harms us in "Counting the Many Ways Sugar Harms Your Health." Among some of the most significant ways are that sugar feeds cancer cells and has been connected with the development of cancer of the breast, ovaries, prostate, rectum, pancreas, biliary tract, lung, gallbladder and stomach. In addition, it can cause diseases such as: arthritis, asthma, multiple sclerosis, gallstones, appendicitis, hemorrhoids, varicose veins, osteoporosis, food allergies, eczema, cataracts, nearsightedness, emphysema, tooth decay and gum disease. In addition, sugar intake has been shown to be higher in those with Parkinson's disease.

Appleton agrees with many who say sugar is an addictive substance which can be intoxicating, similar to alcohol. This sweet substance has been painted as so innocent that we would never want to take it from a baby. Yet, in Appleton's list are the many ways excessive sugar consumption affects children including impairing behavior and cognition. To read the list, go [HERE](#).

We have become dependent on prepackaged everything and, thus, depending on sugar to help us make it through the day. Our lives are moving like whirlwinds. We have no time to cook real food from scratch like our ancestors did. We have allowed quick and easy foods, those laden with sugar and preservatives, to creep into our lives.

We supported the production by purchasing those easy-to-fix meals that taste so good. The food industry has discovered that sugar makes anything taste better. To sell their brand their food has to have more sugar to taste better than the other brand.

The heads of the large food manufacturers read the news, too,

and know that sugar is causing all types of diseases, but they still give us what we want. Do we really want obesity, heart disease, cancer and Alzheimer's? Apparently we do.

Give It Up

We want it. We crave it. We will pay anything to get it. It masquerades as something innocent, but it is killing us. Maybe it is killing us slowly, but it doing a very effective job.

When I gained up to 430 pounds and stayed there for years, extreme addiction to sugar was the blame, but so was the fact that I opened the door to that happening. I made the choice to eat the foods I ate.

It doesn't really matter that sugar addiction is one of the most "normal" addictions around, if any addiction is normal. There was only one way for me (and you) to get free. I had to surrender it. I didn't think I could do it and I certainly couldn't have done it without God's help.

I had to commit to it, want to do it, aspire to rise above my circumstances, apply discipline to make it work, follow a planned way of changing my death-giving food habits, deal with cravings and temptations and add components like exercise, rest, play, relaxation and intentional time with God.

The most important ingredient, though, was to admit to God that I am weak and I need His strength to go forward one day, one hour, one minute at a time.

Set Free By God's Grace

I am and always will be a sugar addict set free by God's grace. There really is no cure to magically remove addiction. There is only a way to get through each day holding tightly to Jesus with both hands. I realize I can never let go because the minute I do is when I begin to slide back into the sugar pit. Life is not happier there. It's mind-numbingly brutal.

I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that “when I am weak [in human strength], then I am strong [truly able, truly powerful, truly drawing from God’s strength]” (2 Cor. 12:10b, AMP). It works like this. When I admit my weakness for sugar and ask for God’s help, He gives me the strength to make it through the moment and make the right choice.

Giving up sugar and gluten is a lifestyle for me. After many years of adhering to this choice, I rarely have cravings. If I do I know how to get through them. I have to always remember that I never want to be captured by a substance again. I finally have found a good use for my stubbornness because I “stubbornly refuse to go back to the bondage of my past” (Gal. 5:1b, TPT).

In this entire process, I’ve lost over 250 pounds and tons of emotional baggage. I’m finally a whole, healthy, happy woman, but it’s all because I found out just a little sugar really can hurt me.

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of five books and two study guides, including her latest, *Sweet Journey to Transformation: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Live Healthy*, and her No. 1 best-seller, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds*. She is also a blogger, spiritual weight loss coach (check out her coaching group, *Overcomers Academy*) and speaker at .

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