

Josie's Story – Can't Trick Me Anymore

I just wish this were all clearer. When I get too close to the stove, pain tells me so. When I'm getting dehydrated, I get a strong urge to drink water. When I push myself too hard, fatigue tells me to take a nap instead of a few laps. So where was the aversion to sweets that would have stopped me from eating my way into depression and weight gain? There was none. Just the opposite, the signals I was getting said, "Eat this and feel energized." They were giving me bad information and making me do exactly the wrong thing.

Something is messed up. Brains are supposed to help you survive, not dig your grave. They are supposed to give you warnings: Pain! Hot! Run! Duck! Eat! Don't Eat! Vomit! Unfortunately, "Avoid processed foods!" is not in my brain's vocabulary. And the commercials didn't help me figure this out either. I want my money back. I want my money back for all those products that led with nutritional information like "low fat," "no fat" and "no cholesterol." I believed they were safer foods. I ate them and fed them to my children. I should have figured out something was wrong when I hid the no-fat cookies on the top shelf of the pantry and all the kids became climbers.

I now have a family of cranky adults and hyper children who think it's their God-given right to eat powdery donuts and stacks of pre-made waffles. As the most nutritionally responsible adult in the house it falls on me to clean up the mess, brought to us by the sponsors of our favorite TV shows.

The word I hear at Suppers to describe the jam I'm in is "hijacked." My body's own message system -- cravings -- tells me exactly the opposite of what I truly need. Faced with one plate of fish and vegetables and another of brownies and peanut butter cookies, there is never, NEVER a time when I'd pick fish and vegetables based on how I feel. As it dawned on me the changes I'd have to make to get well, I cried. I still cry.

There are two things keeping me going. One is the table of friends in varying stages of fixing their problems. There are people in all stages of recovery from the food supply. I have actually met people who used to feel about fish and vegetables the way I feel. And now they enjoy them.

The second is learning to read my body. The idea that how I feel is data is working now that I am learning the language of my body. Here are the translations:

When I have a sudden crash midmorning, it's my body saying "no coffee, dummy, your blood sugar is low. Eat an omelet for breakfast." When a wave of depression descends on me at 3:00, an apple with almond butter will hold me together until I can get home. I whisper "fish and vegetables" the whole ride home."

"Lows" in all forms I now stare in the face with my newfound interpretation. "You can't trick me, low blood sugar doesn't mean eat sugar, it means avoid it at all costs."

I am so angry that our family is stuck with this mess. But at least we are getting our roadmap out. How I feel is data as long I understand the language my body is yelling at me.