

Leslie's Story – Healthier Sources of Pleasure

There is something I don't do now that I used to do. I used to "take care of myself" by diving into a pint of ice cream. Ice cream consumption as a form of self care may not make sense to everybody, but for me the pleasure was intense and the results were reliable. The downside was that I could never figure out exactly how much insulin to take to cover the ice cream. Plus, once I started eating ice cream, I always ate more than I had planned to. Diabetics walk a thin line every day. You want to be sure to take enough insulin to get your sugar down because high sugars over time lead to a long list of horrible problems like blindness and foot amputation. But on the other hand, you don't want to take too much insulin and have your blood sugar go too low because you can wind up with the debilitating hypoglycemic responses of shaking, sweating, dizziness, intense carb cravings and possibly passing out.

I had to find a healthier source of pleasure. I had to replace old ways of taking care of myself with new ways that didn't have such bad consequences.

First I had to set several ground rules for myself. If I follow them, I know I will be safe. However, if I give in to the urge to buy some ice cream "just this once", I slip up, over eat it, and wind up with blood sugar problems. So, here are my rules:

1. No ice cream in the house, ever.
2. If my family insists on having ice cream, they have to go out to get it and just buy single serving sizes.
3. I do not go with my family for ice cream. This is an activity my husband can do with the kids. They can bond around ice cream, not me. I can bond by serving my healthy meals and snacks or leading them in a walk or hike.
4. When I get the urge to satisfy my physical hunger, I seek whole foods, such as fresh fruit, to nourish my body. My favorites are crunchy green apples, fresh strawberries and blue berries, melon, figs, mangos. I have come to enjoy these immensely knowing that one small apple or one cup of fresh berries are my lowest sugar choices.
5. When I get the urge to satisfy my emotional hunger, my best defense is to get out of the house and start moving my body in some way, any way. You may call this exercise, but I call it happiness. Here are some of my favorite things to do to nurture myself physically:
 - I start by getting outside and breathing in some delicious fresh air. Notice it entering my body, filling my lungs and then breathing it out. When I repeat this deep breathing a few times, I instantly feel better.
 - I like to grab my iPod, loaded with all my favorite music, and a pair of sneakers and go out for a walk. Even if I just go around the block, around my yard or take out the garbage.
 - Sometimes I just like to stand or sit on my porch.
 - Other times I feel compelled to do a little gardening and pull a few weeds. Just walking around my yard and picking up fallen sticks is often enough to get me in touch with nature and lift my mood.

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- Or, I will walk or drive over to a local park and walk around to look at the flowers and the trees.
- Walking is one of my favorite activities. I can go slow and make it a more meditative walk, or if I am feeling energetic, I can take a more fast-paced walk and get my heart really pumping.
- I often like to grab my cell phone and call a friend, my mom, anyone, and talk while I walk.
- Sometimes I feel like calling a friend to see if they want to go for a walk with me NOW or soon.
- Or, at other times I like to have a destination for my walk. I head off to do a simple errand or mail a letter.
- Jumping on a rebounder, a mini trampoline, is fast becoming one of my newest passions. I keep mine in my dining room for any time during the day I feel the need to jump for a few minutes. It makes me happy as I feel like a kid again. Some times I bring the rebounder outside in my back yard and jump in the fresh air...talk about FUN!
- Hopping on my bicycle and just riding around the neighborhood a few times is also a great way to shift my moods and get a bit of exercise. It doesn't have to be a big long ride with fancy biking clothes, just a fun, casual ride around the block for 15 or 20 minutes.
- I have one friend who puts on some fun music and dances around the house for 45 minutes every day. Usually her 6-year-old daughter joins her. She swears by this!
- I just realized that I didn't say anything about going to a yoga class, one of the most calming things I know of. The combination of breathing, bending and stretching coupled with a meditative relaxation at the end does wonders not only for my body, but my psyche as well. You can find classes in gentle and even chair yoga if you are a beginner.
- And finally, joining a gym has been another wonderful option for me, especially during the winter and in bad weather. My gym offers a wide array of classes in dance, weight training, Pilates, yoga, and all sorts of different types of aerobics to keep me from getting bored. Some days I feel like doing a high intensity spin class, and other days I take a leisurely swim in the lap pool.

All of these activities alter my moods and shift my reality. They make me happy and make me feel good about myself. They take my body physically *away* from food and my mind *off* thoughts of food. Plus, I am burning up some calories at the same time.

Once I reenter the house, I am refreshed and more in control of my emotions. I become more in touch with my hunger and often find that I am not physically hungry.

When you take a pleasurable habit away, you have to find something to replace it with. Maybe not everybody can love exercise like I do, but I firmly believe there is a healthier source of pleasure for anyone who will make the effort to find it and develop it.