

## IMMUNITY LESSON 19

# Don't Let Stress Affect Your Food Choices

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**A** VERY REAL CHALLENGE TO *Better Eating* is the frequent need to make the right food choices *where the good food choices seem to not exist*. This happens frequently when ordering take-out food during our lockdown. It also may happen when dining out for pleasure whenever that option returns.

All restaurants, cafés, food trucks, and even fast food outlets have a menu or list of offerings grouped in combinations. **These are just suggestions** to make your choices easier and to speed your choice process along. More efficient for them.

You, as the customer, can change their printed suggestions to a combination of ingredients that you wish to eat, including substituting items so you can mix and match the healthiest, most good-mood-producing items together.

**Don't automatically accept their suggestion** and accept some combination that contains dishes that are less than healthy. Order items that will make you feel good and are healthier for you even if they are not listed together. The establishment should be glad to accommodate you.

Combine the healthy foods listed with other healthy foods by choosing an entrée but substituting the veggies from another entrée instead of the offered starch or simple carb. Other choices include:

- Lesser volume of bread for your sandwich
- Salad instead of fries
- Veggies instead of starches
- Water or soda water instead of the biggie drink full of sugar

**You'll feel better about your ability to choose and you will feel better after consuming a healthier meal. Your "gut buddies" and your immune system will thank you.**

### Effects of Stress on Food Choices

Foods eaten during times of stress are typically those high in fat and/or sugar content. **Stress causes humans to choose hyperpalatable comfort foods** such as fast foods, snacks, and sweets even in the absence of hunger and lack of the body's need for these calories.

We've all been there before. When we are stressed, we eat to relax ourselves. Our bodies just want to overcome the stress with little regard for the long-term effects of these poor choices, even if we realize these choices will make stress worse in the short/long term and may contribute to us feeling poorly when combined with other stressors we cannot control.

### How Does One Control This Urge?

Do your best to diminish stress with — you guessed it — the **Four Pillars of Well-Being**: *Sleep, Positive Attitude, Movement* during the day, and *Eating to Feel Good!* You will diminish your stress with these habit changes to a lower level so that you are not as stimulated to go to unhealthy hyperpalatable foods. You'll still have to exercise some restraint.

We can be mindful of our mood and stress levels when we get the urge to cruise through the fridge or get a "calming" snack from the vending machine at work. Instead, go for a walk outside, eat an apple or other fruit, and you'll be a lot better off physically and mentally.

***Simply, don't let the stress cause poor food choices.***

Be mindful and just do your best whether ordering food or when you are just stressed out a bit.

### The Bottom Line — Again

Good food = Good mood. Bad food = Bad mood.



#### JOY'S PEARL

"We have choices  
about food.

Let's make the right ones  
so we feel better."

#### Today's # 1 Task •••••

Purposefully order the healthiest meal you can when ordering food. Mix and match your choices without reflexly complying to the offered menu.

#### Today's # 2 Task •••••

Be mindful of seeking highly palatable comfort foods when stressed. Recognize the urge and use the [WOOP](#) method to develop a plan to avoid bad mood foods.