

Eat well, feel well: The interesting connection between mood and food!

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- How mood regulates food

One thing that determines our enjoyment in life is mood. Mood changes from day to day, moment to moment. We may be happy, energized, have optimistic feelings, take part in enjoyable activities, feel loving; but we may also feel unpleasant, moody, irritable, anxious, tired and even depressed. We've all come across these feelings and have experienced the enormous impact they have on our psychological and physical wellbeing. However, as people tend to favor positivity and happiness, we try to regulate our bad moods by engaging in certain activities and routines such as eating, exercising, smoking, drinking, socializing, playing games, watching TV, etc.

According to research data, from time to time, at least one third of us turn to food when we're in a bad mood. Think for a moment if this happens to you. When are you most prone to make bad choices, to break the rules of a diet and to choose some kind of "comfort food?"

This actually can happen when we're happy - for example when we're socializing and we combine food with nice company. But the time when we are most vulnerable to overeating and bad food choices is when we're in a bad mood.

“Emotional eating” happens when bad moods are too heavy to carry and a shelter is needed, something that in the past made us feel good. This behavior creates a vicious cycle where we search for a mood fix, get a food fix as an easy solution and momentarily feel ok.

However, the drastic changes in blood glucose can cause mood swings; thus, after a while we easily slip into a tired and remorseful mode and the cycle begins once again. Unfortunately, attempts to regulate mood through “emotional eating” are an important cause of being overweight. In the long term, if this cycle isn't broken we may end up with chronic metabolic diseases.

How food regulates mood

The other side of the coin is that different foods affect our moods. Scientific evidence is very promising in this new direction of research. So, does this mean that that a piece of chocolate can make us smile, or that a cup of tea can pass positive energy to the drinker?

Science now possesses a huge list of food items and ingredients with at least some supporting information regarding their positive effects on memory, cognitive performance, brain health, mood, sleep, endurance, jet lag and prevention of cognitive decline.

Those foods shown to be the most promising include polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), vitamins and minerals, phospholipids, and some botanicals. Some are already marketed as herbal medicines and supplements; others as functional foods. Moreover, it is proven that brain chemicals (a.k.a neurotransmitters) such as serotonin, dopamine and acetylcholine that influence the way we think, feel and behave, can be affected by what we've eaten.

Foods that have the capacity to influence neurotransmitters are brown rice, sesame seeds, fish, eggs, bananas, spinach and many more. A lot of scientific research has identified that maintaining steady blood glucose by eating small and regular meals throughout the day is the ultimate weapon against mood fluctuations.

Generally, keeping food consumption in moderation and making smart choices of ingredients, can guarantee your emotional well being. Having this evidence in mind, the new trend in gastronomy cannot be perceived as excessively sophisticated. Restaurants around the world are now serving food according to the mood somebody wants to achieve.

You can now order food that defies your depressive mood or drink refreshments that make you feel energized. Furthermore, new diet patterns have emerged through the scientific community that can make us happier with our outer and inner selves.

If we want to draw a conclusion about the connection between mood and food, clearly it's far smarter to regulate your mood through your food rather than letting your mood regulate your food intake.

What's your experience with your food and mood?

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