



Stress... & Sugar?

(I sure hope you read this one...)

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Do you ever experience bouts of depression, impatience or irritability?

Have you ever had episodes of binge eating, followed by regret and remorse? There are many, many stress-relief tips posted on my website, but I really, really hope you read this one.

We live in a culture plagued by stress-related illness, and illness-related stress.

My observations of sugar's potential impact on both of these are based upon both personal experience, and my work with thousands of people who come to me seeking help in preventing, reducing and releasing physical and emotional symptoms associated with stress. (*e.g. anxiety, depression, insomnia or excessive sleep, muscle tension and pain, control issues, fears, unsatisfying relationships, among many others.*)

In my experience as a stress-relief facilitator, there are very few preventable risk factors for stress about which I feel more strongly than sugar. Even at low levels, I believe that for some people subtle sugar-sensitivity is often a misdiagnosed, or completely overlooked problem that can wreak havoc on physical and emotional well-being, self-esteem, mood shifts, relationships, job performance, and perhaps even immune function. While I am not a physician, I believe that for many, sugary foods can unquestionably be mood-altering substances. Sugary foods can sap energy, create cognitive fog and forgetfulness, exacerbate inflammatory pain, result in weight gain, water-retention and with long-term use, a potentially serious sequelae including depression, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. These same foods often contain significant amounts of sodium and/or white flour, and eating them can set in motion physiological cravings for more, in addition to the emotional attraction to sweets and "junk" food.

Wait--There's More!

As if those cravings and behaviors were not stressful enough, once the cycle is in motion, self-esteem plummets as one repeatedly swears off sweets but "falls off the wagon," wondering why. In a culture with so many at risk for depression, diabetes and/or heart disease, we read nutritional labels and find the ubiquitous high fructose corn syrup, even in non-sweet foods. Do you suffer from recurring yeast infections? Sinus trouble? Digestive difficulties? All of these can be exacerbated by sugar, in some. If you struggle with any of the symptoms mentioned in this paragraph, try the following:

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"Sugar, Ahh Honey-Honey"

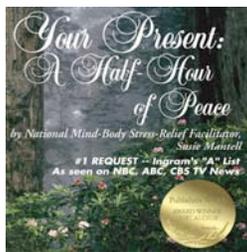
Are You Sugar Sensitive?

1. For two weeks, eliminate all foods and beverages that contain sugar in any form, including honey, molasses, brown sugar, etc. Reminder: "Natural" does not mean "Healthy." Ask anyone who suffers from allergies
2. If any sugar-y ingredient appears above the 6th in the list, skip this food. Words ending in: "ose" are some form of sugar. (e.g. *glucose, sucrose, dextrose, fructose, etc.*)
3. Take a look at the Glycemic Index and The Glycemic Load of specific foods. See which fruits are highest in sugar. Are you a big fan of bananas? Grapes? It would be advisable to also eliminate flour and all white carbohydrates during this trial to get a true sense of how sugars do, or do not, impact your stress levels, energy, and overall sense of well-being.
- 4.Regarding alcohol: If you can take it or leave it, leave it during these 2 weeks. If you can't, that's a different problem and you may want to look seriously at the role alcohol plays in your life.

What have you got to lose?

I see many people who struggle with the stress, anxiety and depression that accompany eating disorders. Many find that two culprits that tend to trigger cravings are sugar, flour, salt and fat, in various forms. If you experience episodes of overeating when you feel out of control, try these two weeks off all baked goods, cold cereals and flour in all forms, including pasta. In just two weeks, many people see a dramatic decrease in cravings, an increase in energy and greatly improved mood in just days. Your long-term goal may not be 100% elimination, but this simple two week experiment will show you the impact, if any, of sugar, in its many forms, on your personal stress levels and well-being. This could be one of the greatest gifts you'll ever give yourself!

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END OF THIS TIP##