

Healthy Wednesday Club

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Winter struck Sydney and everyone ran for their heaters and winter woollies! Most of the year in Sydney is so pleasant. We are quick to complain. “We’ll all be rooned, said Hanrahan” as the famous poem goes. (John O’Brien, 1921, *Around the Boree Log and Other Verses* <http://www.middlemiss.org/lit/authors/obrienj/poetry/hanrahan.html>)

It seems the snowflakes last week were just right. Maybe we will stay with the icy theme and the artwork of icebergs. In the article we might look at what it is about self discipline that makes us go cold on doing what is healthy or beneficial in the long term. Are we being blinded by the promise of instant gratification?

Icebergs freeze in Layers



It seems that when sediment mixes in water it freezes like the layers in sandstone. When water freezes very quickly it turns blue and transparent. Like great big lollies, these icebergs float artistically about!

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FABULOUS LOW GI FOOD

Chickpea Burgers

Ingredients

1 onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 can chickpeas, drained
1 cup multigrain bread breadcrumbs
1 egg
1 teaspoon parsley, chopped
4 small mushrooms, finely chopped
¼ teaspoon cumin (to taste)
¼ teaspoon turmeric (to taste)
¼ teaspoon paprika (to taste)
1 tablespoon oat bran (if required)

Method:

Fry onion & garlic.
Process (in food processor) chickpeas until they resemble breadcrumbs.
Add breadcrumbs, egg, parsley, cumin, turmeric, paprika & process to combine.
If mixture is too dry add oat bran.
Roll into balls & fry in non stick pan sprayed with oil.
Can be made into 4 patties.
Serve with cos lettuce & tabouli on pita bread with hommus or beetroot dip.

HEALTHY WEDNESDAY ACTIVITIES

Body: How about some consideration of all those poor people who are on their feet all day. What you need is a chance to sit down. More importantly you need a chance to stretch out a bit. When you get a moment sit on a chair and stretch your legs out with you feet pointing upwards. Now point the feet straight. You may need to hold the side of the chair for balance. Do that a few times. Now add an upper body stretch by lifting your arms above your head (keep your legs out straight). If the chair is not too hard, see if you can straighten your body with only your bottom and shoulder blades touching the chair. Take it easy, just stretch comfortably. Then sit for a few minutes and breath deeply to release

Mind: There are a number of simple nutritional things that can help the brain function. Omega-3 oil helps to keep the membrane around synapses stay soft and fluid. This improves the efficiency of synaptic flow greatly. How well your synapses function is the difference between being able to process a thought and the signal running out of energy and the thought process giving up. Another important help is Ginko because it helps the bloodflow in the brain. Each synapse is given energy (glucose) from a tiny capillary. There are some 400 miles of capillaries in the brain. Ginko helps keep the vessels soft and flowing well. You see, it's all about the flow.

Soul: Give your very favourite person a hug. If you can't be there in person, send a text or email. Also give someone not so favourite a hug, too. You don't have to grab them with arms, you can simply hug them with some kind words. Simple things like, "G'day", "How are you today?", "Is there anything I can do to help?"

Instant Gratification – Is It Good for Us?

There is a classic experiment from the 1960's where Dr Walter Mischel of Stanford University put a 4-year old in a room. On the table was a marshmallow and a bell. If they rang the bell, he would come back and they could eat the marshmallow. If, however, they didn't ring the bell and waited for him to come back on his own, they could then have two marshmallows.

In videos of the experiment, you can see the children squirming, kicking, hiding their eyes - desperately trying to exercise self-control so they can wait and get two marshmallows. Their performance varied widely. Some broke down and rang the bell within a minute. Others lasted 15 minutes.

The children who waited longer went on to get higher SAT scores. They got into better colleges and had, on average, better adult outcomes. The children who rang the bell quickest were more likely to become bullies. They received worse teacher and parental evaluations 10 years later and were more likely to have drug problems at age 32.

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Mostly people see this as the verification of the benefits of willpower, which is true, but there is a lot more happening in this experiment. For a start the 'reward' was a marshmallow. It wasn't a drum to bang or some other toy. It was a piece of sugary food. This is a very important.

What is important is that Dr Mischel used something that was considered almost impossible to resist and would give an almighty show of will power. The fact that it was food, but not just food, high sugar, sweet food, tells us so much about how humans function.

Some things are hardwired into 'I need it NOW!'. We need will power to resist succumbing to those base needs and wants. Sweet sugary food is not just desirable because of the eating pleasure. It is desirable because of the chemicals that it activates in the brain. Pleasure, positive anticipation and self satisfaction as well as calming the mood and soothing the soul. All this can come from a shot of sugar. Wow!

The chemicals involved are dopamine (positive anticipation), serotonin (pleasure, calm mood), norepinephrin (alertness, pleasure), oxytocin (self satisfaction, libido) plus a few others. These also help us feel less pain and reduce any body discomforts. You can feel mighty good on this 'sugar high'. There are other things that release these chemicals, too.

The excitement of success, winning, overcoming or defeating. The 'Aha!' moment where there is a breakthrough in some struggle or problem. Being in great company. Freeing yourself from some form of oppression. All these things are able to dominate our feelings and induce us to take action.

I might promise you all the riches of the universe, but that doesn't mean that you will do anything. If, on the other hand, I get you excited about a possibility, use visualisation to make you feel that you can definitely have this great thing, stir up my own enthusiasm so that you catch my energy and create the impression that you can have what you want RIGHT NOW!, then you might throw all caution to the wind and grab for that marshmallow because you don't have to wait. You can have all the marshmallows you want. No one can tell you what to do. No one is able to get in the way of your dreams. You can have it NOW! It's just a matter of taking it NOW, doing it NOW, being it NOW!

Hell, just give me the damn marshmallow...

The message that really comes from Dr Mischel's experiment is that if we are only motivated by the reward, then why bother with the journey? If all that matters is winning, then why not just cheat? If all that matters is my own sense of pleasure and happiness, then why do we need other people?

More than just using will power to resist temptation, Dr Mischel gave us an insight into a body that evolved for the savannah, where there was not quite enough food and not quite enough pleasure. We evolved to grab it when it comes, because it doesn't come often. Then we put that body in a world that has more food than it needs and immediate pleasure everywhere. It's so easily satisfy our greed and need nowadays. Unfortunately, we are discovering that constant immediate gratification is killing us.

Good marks at school and better colleges is definitely the sort of positive outcome we want for ourselves and our children. So why do we not fight the corporations who manipulate us by giving us not only one marshmallow, but a second and a third. The fact that too many marshmallows will eventually cause diabetes or arthritis or cancer doesn't seem to matter – just like cigarettes or too much alcohol. It's all about getting what you want, when you want it.

This is no longer an issue about making better people through the practice of will power. It is coming down to a life and death choice. Take the pleasure now or live a life with a journey?

Looking forward to sharing more thoughts, suggestions, news and making a very Healthy Wednesday connection with you!

Take Care, Richard, Susie and The Healthy Wednesday Team

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