

Abiding Abstinence

"Complete abstinence is easier than perfect moderation"...St. Augustine

Hard as it is for so many people to wrap their brains around, for a true addict, "never" is a thousand times easier than "sometimes"; it's just as true for me of sugars, grains and dairy products as it is for heroin addicts. Addicts love (and LIVE) to bargain with their substances/behaviors-of-choice, and sadly, "sometimes" leaves the door wide open for us to begin the bargaining dance over and over again. I would include behavior (as opposed to substance) addictions in the above example because I think essentially the same concept applies to shopping, pornography, sex, and gambling addicts; a certain kind of abstinence must be a cornerstone of their recovery process too, despite the fact there is ostensibly no physiological component to these addictions.

It is still a dance.

In both my real life, and even in my lowcarb-list life, when I reveal much about how/why I abstain from certain foods, it often elicits noticeable reactions from other people, and much of the time those reactions are not support, admiration or understanding.

Luckily, and perhaps necessarily, I came into this at a point in my life, a point I only wish I could have found sooner, where other people's reactions to my eating decisions were not at all relevant to my continuing commitment to that behavior. (It should go without saying that I go to what some might call some pretty extreme lengths to ensure that my decision to abstain entails no work or sacrifice on the part of anyone else's pocketbook or eating choices. I do not expect or rely on others to provide the food I require; part of that decision to abstain was to take care of this for myself.)

Just because the reactions of others don't affect my decision to abstain, it doesn't mean those reactions don't affect my feelings; the reactions of others have at times been frustrating and even occasionally hurtful to me. And I can't help but wonder (silently) if the same people would react in a similar spirit to an alcoholic who turned down a glass of wine. But again, expecting other people to always be supportive or comfortable with my choices, expecting them to react the way I would prefer, is...thankfully...not any part of my decision to remain abstinent.

Some folks seem awestruck yet overwhelmed at even the momentary thought of deciding the same for themselves (not that I ever suggested it). Others are put off, and a few surprisingly saddened or angered by my decision PLUS my willingness and ability to actually follow through on it.

This is the abide part of my "decide, provide and abide" mantra, a concept which I've found some folks misunderstand. I use it to describe a quiet inner tolerance, not to "follow". In other words, abide in this context does not mean "just follow the eating decision you made." It means to *tolerate* (as calmly and wordlessly as possible) every

reaction, indeed ALL the fallout—expected and unexpected—that sticking to this decision will bring.

It's not generally accepted that abstaining from sweets (and sweet-substitutes) always and forever, especially if you're not fat anymore and/or people never KNEW you were ever heavy, is a necessary, healthy (mentally or physically), or even a POLITE thing to do; and even if it is all-of-the above, well gosh, nobody REALLY does that, right? That's not abstinence, that's perfection, and nobody can or should be perfect...or so the rationalization goes.

This is when you can inadvertently cause others to feel and say things that reflect their own inner dissonance. One of the skills that people who have been able to continue eating mindfully and abstinently for many years is learning how to function socially around these (momentary) big/bad, uncomfortable vibes coming from others. And this is the uncomfortable part that we have to slowly come to being comfortable with.

Adele Stratton, Founder
www.leadwiththediet.com