

Information You Don't Need "The Know" and "The Do"

There is a recent book out (*Eating, Drinking and Overthinking*, by Susan Nolen-Hoeksema) which “diagnoses” and describes what the author perceives as a pervasive “toxic triangle” behavior pattern. I’d guesstimate that approximately 109% of addicted and binge eaters fall somewhere along the spectrum of this pattern.

I have not thoroughly read the book and don’t plan to, I’ve only briefly perused it. And, perhaps ironically, it’s my suspicion that, even if you think you might fit this pattern to a T, even if you think “Eureka, someone has finally figured out what is WRONG with me!”—it’s probably a lousy idea to get this book. Because relentlessly chasing down information on what’s wrong with us is a big part of our problem.

From a review on Amazon.com:

She has done research on "ruminative thinking", which she describes as "the tendency to respond to distress by focusing on the causes and consequences of your problems, without moving into active problem-solving." To put it more plainly-and less appetizingly-ruminative thinkers chew on thoughts excessively, like a cow chewing its cud.

I believe we do this instead of, and as a means of procrastinating, DOing anything, especially anything consistent, to change our pattern. We chew on our thoughts and feelings UNTIL we get so distressed that we overeat and drink. Then we wake up and begin ruminating, THINKING/FEELING about the crazy way we’re acting, until the next thing we know, we’ve done another turn around that same mulberry bush. The pattern is impeccably self-sustaining. We engage in the over-THINKING as a way to excuse and thereby enable the under-DOing. There are thoughts throughout the essays here on how and why I believe we’ve developed this pattern; I think it’s primarily the unintended consequences of the pervasiveness of the marketing media in a culture where our basic survival needs are almost too-easily achieved or provided, our lives now are almost too-easy.

But the more important, fundamental truth is that WHY we do this really doesn’t much matter.

We don’t need one more bit of information or research to add to our cud, we need to stop thinking and researching so much, period. What we need so much more is some structure and consistency to our behavior, and being that you’ve most likely come to this site in search of remedies to the unpleasant (but not really so mysterious) results of the overeating—and sometimes the drinking—part of the pattern, the first step to breaking the pattern is to insert some simple but serious structure and consistency into the eating part—the DOING part—of the triangle and to cease and desist with the RESEARCHING and THINKING part of our day-to-day **pattern**.

This journey can really be distilled into two aspects, “the know” and “the do”. Assuming we have thoroughly read Atkins (or any other good lowcarb diet plan book, such as

Protein Power, Dr. Bernstein, etc.), there is little more we need to learn, especially after we give the plan a try and we find we feel GREAT, usually better than we've felt in our lives. At that point we know that our bodies clearly prefer this to what we've been doing, and we have all "the know" we need.

Lack of knowledge, information, or lack of understanding is not the reason the majority of people who embark on lowcarb as a life change end up abandoning it. Neither is lack of "support" from anyone else.

It isn't because we don't KNOW. It is because we don't—we **won't**—DO.

I once saw someone cycling in the classic CRL pattern giving advice to a newbie: She stated, with lots of LOLs to explain/excuse herself and the fact that she was once again at her highest weight, "I could ace a written test on this. My trouble is in the execution."

The difficulty with executing the diet—which is what leading with the diet is—is because if we are emotionally addicted eaters. Staying on course means removing our habitual emotional medications (including food and often alcohol as well). When we engineer that bargaining out of our lives, eventually we will begin coming undone, often in some surprising ways. This is the stuff that begins happening after the lowcarb "honeymoon" period. Most often, especially with first-time lowcarbers, it happens within days or weeks of making the changes, and—bam!— they're off (and then on/off/on/off and headed for CRL-land).

For the more determined among us, for those able to white knuckle through the early months and years (usually with the substitute thrill/pay-off of weight loss), I've observed that the undoing will still eventually occur, often not until getting very close or after getting to goal (that's when it happened with me).

When we're undone, our pattern (which slowly became our "normal" behavior), is to reach for our medication(s). Somewhere along the journey of life we developed and cemented this pattern to help us cope with all manner of unpleasantness. No matter where we are on the path to change, even YEARS into lowcarb, if/when we return to this pattern, we're risking a return (slow or swift) to the beginning. Changing the pattern requires years of learning, through time and experience. Learning to endure social and emotional discomfort without medication.

It's not that this can't be done. It's that, until this time, we haven't really believed or known it was possible and we haven't developed the skills to do it.

If we want this change enough to DO it, to make it happen, then what I think we have to do is slowly rebuild, from the ground up, a new life via this new—and yes, in most cultures, unusual—approach to our food culture. For us addicted eaters/drinkers, that means rebuilding (by sustained abstinence) most especially from the point that the "undone" begins to happen, rebuilding our lives, our patterns, "from the diet up."

We can, and we have to, gently and self-lovingly force ourselves to go through all the feelings and frustrations of going against both our physiologically AND psychologically addicted dragon and our culture which can sometimes feel judgmental and unforgiving.

We have to go through what is, when we get right down to it, some occasional awkwardness and embarrassment (I sum that all up as “abiding”) until we’ve eventually built stronger social boundaries and the emotional strength and consistency to accept (through our behavioral commitment to continuing abstinence, not merely a rhetorical or psychological commitment) that, like it or not, fair or not, somewhere, sometime, poor food choices (and sometimes alcohol) became the unchangeable base of our physical and emotional foundation. We can either get and keep our foundations sturdy and rock-solid by eliminating problem foods (and alcohol), or we can keep conking ourselves over our heads with food-bargain sledge-hammers, pulling the rug out from under our own feet, falling down and starting over and over and over, which is the yo-yo pattern we naively thought was going to be so easy to break free from just by going on a lowcarb diet and switching medications—by switching to cheesecake made with Splenda.

So often we’ve heard “knowledge is power” and “attitude is everything”. Those are smarmy platitudes. Knowledge and attitude merely constitute “the know.” Action is power. Without action, without “the do”, a better attitude and more knowledge are useless.

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