

The Methadone Phenomenon

In 2004 I had a long discussion with a long-term successful lowcarber who I believe falls more into the category of not as deeply or seriously emotionally (or physiologically) entangled with foods as most of the people who come to online lowcarb forums seeking advice ... She wanted to know why so many of us believe it's a bad idea to advise struggling lowcarbers to enjoy some lowcarb products or take a few days totally off the diet in order to make it all more livable and/or to kick-start stalled weight loss.

I know many people at goal [who are eating lowcarb products such as breads and bars] and it will not mess with their emotions, cause cravings or weight gain. Especially when they have been eating this way for a long time.

There certainly are a few lowcarbers at goal I know of who *are* capable of going off lowcarb regularly, some as regularly as one day a month, and getting right back on and it does not seem to physically or emotionally undo them. But I also think we would have to agree that most of the people we know who have ever lost weight, with lowcarb or by any other method, most of the people who drift on and off lowcarb message boards, do NOT appear to have an easy time of getting back on once they take steps, especially certain steps, off the plan. We seem to be much more seriously addicted than those (lucky?) few other people. Often we come into lowcarb already knowing we are addicts. I didn't. I really believed my problems with food were 100% physiological. I didn't see or realize the emotional element of my own situation for a long time, until almost a year after I got to goal.

I never stalled for a long time, since I did go off for a day or two and got right back on and no problems and broke that stall and lost weight again like first starting. Is that something to dismiss for some people and others that I know?

Again, there are always some exceptions, but I think it is a risky recommendation because in the vast majority of people, those I would term emotionally entangled or addicted eaters, this generally doesn't work. Most lowcarbers who try this end up falling off the wagon HARD and it is an overwhelming, monumental task for the ones who DO manage to pull themselves back out of the gutter. It really appears to me that for the majority of addicted eaters, it's about as helpful as advising an alcoholic to have a glass of wine to "get over" the tedium of sobriety. In a sense it's a little like recommending dietary Russian Roulette, except that in this game there are 5 bullets in the 6-bullet chamber. This might work for maybe 1 in 6, although truthfully, I think it's fewer than that, more like 1 in 100.

One thing, I never ever eat sugar, but some sugar free stuff, but not everyday, but once in a great while, but not at all now. No need for it nor want it. Not because of cravings, but how it makes me feel physically, but not mentally, which is a difference. I really do not understand? I am serious. Just like when I drank the shakes during induction for the sweet tooth. It got the sugar out of my system, but was not craving sugar all the time, when I stopped it? Many people said, don't

do it and go by the book, but even the book showed, that it was okay during induction by the book he wrote. You are to follow it, but not all the way, if needed? It did not impact sugar levels with the shakes? If I did not drink those shakes to get me over the hump, I would have gone off of it, many of times. It helped me to stay on for that reason. IF it helped me to stay on and in the book, why do many say, to stay away from it during induction of they need that hump to get get by for a while, until the real sugar is out of their system? It was a crutch at first, but now, not needed? Just so hard to understand.

Lots of big questions here, but to me it really boils down to one tiny little issue. It seems to me this is mostly a question about the role dietary methadone (lowcarb products made with artificial sweeteners, grains, dairy products, etc.) can play in the recovery process in a widely varying range of food-substance addicts, from the mildly and primarily physiologically addicted, to the more tangled web of psychological/emotional and physiologically seriously addicted. The answer is extremely individual.

Dietary methadone CAN be a useful temporary crutch in the recovery of fairly uncomplicated and primarily physically addicted eaters, like you seemed to be, and just like you experienced with using these products. I sometimes call people like this "metabolically gifted." It seems to me that you came into lowcarb primarily physically addicted to one food-substance, in your case sugar. And you are certainly not alone. Take away the sugar (which you say you NEVER touch) and EVERYTHING changes; you are capable of eating almost anything else, of staying in control of your eating as closely as your body/health needs you to. Sticking to that one personal guideline is, basically, all the "magic" you need.

But the majority of us have situations that are more tangled. We can have multiple physical addictions to sugar, grains, often milk products, and sometimes legumes and nuts. When we use lowcarb-methadone, especially if it contains even trace amounts of our personal poisons, we eventually find ourselves using it as a kind of gateway drug, to bridge us to the point where we can say, "oh what the hell, I've already blown it" and dive head-first into a pan of brownies. You know, the express route back down into the abyss. OR maybe we're luckier (?) and just end up addicted to the methadone, which usually causes us to stop losing weight with lowcarb, which upsets or enrages us, which causes us to start wanting to do with food what we have always done with food which is to eat eat eat, more more more, to medicate, to not feel this disappointment, this humiliation that we've failed once again to control our eating, and our weight, and our life, and other people, and their actions, and their feelings toward us. Like little children rocking on the floor with our hands over our ears saying over and over again "I don't hear that, I don't feel that, that doesn't hurt."

My (wrong?) impression is that you and the other ones who are able to go off plan and return without serious difficulty were never THAT kind of addicted. And I guess where I'm mainly coming from is that no one was ever harmed by operating on the assumption that they are NOT one of the, tiny few who can manage to do that, at least until they get to goal and have had a lot of time and practice living substance-free.

On the other hand, many of us do ourselves serious harm, we do ourselves in, over and over, by assuming, by desperately *wanting* to believe that we are one of the ones who can. That IS the dance of the addict. Addicts need to lead with a cleaner, more mindful plan.

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