



Reclaiming Challenge Foods

Body Brave
June 30th 2021
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Agenda

Welcome + Land Acknowledgement

Introductions

Group norms

Objectives

Exploring challenging foods

Step-by-step guide

Other ideas and tips

Wrap Up & Questions



Land Acknowledgement

Introductions



Group Norms

Confidentiality

Limit use of numbers

Non-diet approach

This is a pro-recovery space

Stay open-minded

Respect one another

**What are you hoping
to learn today?**

A top-down view of a dark-colored bowl filled with fluffy, white popcorn. The popcorn is piled high and has a slightly golden tint. The bowl is set against a light, speckled background.

Learning Objectives

Learn when and why reclaiming challenge foods is important

Identify some of your challenge foods

Be introduced to a step by step guide to reclaiming 1 challenge food at a time

“All Foods Fit”

**What comes up for you
hearing this phrase?**

YOU KNOW
WHAT'S HEALTHIER
THAN KALE?



HAVING A GOOD
RELATIONSHIP
WITH FOOD.

@doodlez4noodles

**Grains &
Starches**

**Fruits and
Vegetables**

**Dairy &
Alternatives**

**Meat &
Alternatives**

**Fats &
Spreads**

**Desserts /
Sweets**



What are your challenge foods?

Why is reclaiming them important to you?



Caution: the first nutrition priority is to eat enough food regularly throughout the day

If trying to reclaim a challenge food leads to you not being able to eat enough or regularly (ex, compensation or skipping meals shows up), slow down and focus on meeting your body's needs first.

Challenge foods

- Avoided foods, feared foods, trigger foods, 'bad' foods, scary foods, weaponized foods...
- Ultimately these are foods that hold **POWER**
- Often these are foods tied with emotions such as anxiety / stress / guilt
- Perhaps they are food you eat regularly already, or maybe you avoid them completely, or maybe they show up sometimes but not often.
- Challenge foods are different from food preferences and dietary restrictions required for medical purposes



What's wrong with avoiding my challenge foods / why bother reclaiming them?

- Restriction of certain foods limits variety
 - Increases risk of inadequate intake and nutrient deficiencies
- Increases likelihood of continued disordered behaviors
 - Often leads to increased food preoccupation
 - Avoidance of a particular food often can set off the binge-restrict cycle or other disordered behaviour
- Can impact ability to maintain social relationships and enjoy food in social settings



Reclaiming these foods

- Neutralizing the power held by the food
 - Legalizing the foods that have been weaponized, feared, and/or demonized. Allowing all foods into our regular eating pattern.
- This can take time!
- Some foods will be easier to reclaim than others, and that's ok!
- It's a process that can be done in a systematic, structured way.
 - Often achieved through "exposures"
 - Habituation
 - Unconditional Permission
- Important to break it down into small steps
 - Even trying out a challenge food as an experiment



Step-by-step guide to reclaiming one challenge food at a time

1. Are you eating enough food regularly?

- If yes, move on. If no, focus on the basics of structured eating first

2. What foods hold power? AKA what are your challenge foods?

- Do a brain dump! Write them down

3. Next, identify what foods have more or less power

- Order them from easiest to hardest, or give each a rating score from 1-10, or divide them into 2-3 categories based on difficulty. Consider why each food is important for you to reclaim.

4. Pick 1 food from your list to start with.

- Perhaps something mid-range in difficulty
- You can break down this 1 food into smaller amounts
- Consider: what are you afraid will happen if you eat this food? What could go well?



5. Plan out how you are going to test this prediction

- Consider all variables – specifically what will the food be and how are you acquiring it, who will be involved, where will you eat the food, when will this take place, etc.

6. Have the food!

- How were you feeling? What was helpful about the experience? What wasn't so helpful? What could you try differently next time?

7. Consider what you need to do next to take care of yourself

- Plan for a self care activity to help relax!

8. Set another goal to eat this food until you feel the power has been dismantled

- Repeat the goal with a few tweaks based on what you learned, or try changing a variable (example, change the location, or change the size or amount of the food)



5-Minute Break

EXAMPLE: Frozen treats

1. Are you eating enough food regularly?

- YES

2. What foods hold power? AKA what are your challenge foods?

- Brain dump – frozen treats including popsicles, ice cream sandwiches, and frozen yogurt are on the list. In the past this has been a binge food and it scares me to bring it back.

3. Next, identify what foods have more or less power

- Popsicles are mid range, ice cream bars are very hard and frozen yogurt is pretty easy and something already included on occasion.

4. Pick 1 food from your list to start with.

- Popsicles! Specifically, a single handle fruit flavoured popsicle that's not sugar-free (orange flavour is my favourite). In time I may want to work up to having a larger popsicle, or one that is chocolate.



5. Plan out how you are going to test this prediction

- Who: myself + my partner who's been a great support for my recovery
- What: we will each have 1 orange popsicle
- How: we will get the popsicles from the corner store
- Where: we will eat it on our back porch
- When: Thursday evening after supper around 7:30 pm
- Why: Popsicles are something I used to enjoy as a kid and I want to be comfortable having them with my nibblings

6. Have the food!

- How were you feeling? A bit nervous beforehand but my partner was a pleasant distraction and offered easy topics of conversation
- What was helpful about the experience? Having someone to share the eating experience with
- What wasn't so helpful? Going to the corner store felt overwhelming
- What could you try differently next time? Perhaps having someone else pick up the frozen treat for me, or using other grounding strategies to help calm me at the store

7. Consider what you need to do next to take care of yourself

- Watched an episode of my favourite TV show after and painted my nails

8. Set another goal to eat this food until you feel the power has been dismantled

- I will try this goal again with some modifications next week, then start picking different kinds of ice cream treats like a chocolate popsicle and eventually and ice cream sandwich.





Other ideas and tips

Pick one challenge food to reclaim at a time. I like to suggest no more than 1 per week.

Consider making a food hierarchy, where you rank your challenge foods from easiest to reclaim to hardest.

- Exposure therapy
- Can also be done with specific foods. Ex, if a full chocolate bar is very hard, start with a mini chocolate bar or just 1 bite

Plan out as many variables as necessary for you to be successful with this challenge food exposure

- who, what, where, when, why, how



Other ideas and tips

Write down specific challenge foods on separate pieces of paper, put them in a jar, and pull one each week.

Pair a challenge food with a food that feels safer/already reclaimed.

Try thinking about having a challenge food as an experiment

Consider meal support

Consider a coping ahead plan

- What are you afraid of? What do you think will happen? What are they facts? What can you do to set yourself up for success? What actually happened and what can you learn from that experience?



Other ideas and tips

Work on reframing the way you talk about food – get rid of labels such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’!

Make use of nutrition affirmations

Use SMART(er) goals and monitor your success. Give yourself a non-food reward when you achieve your goal.

Be gentle with yourself! Self-compassion is HUGE.

Learn from your experiences – identify vulnerabilities

Seek support from a registered health care provider

Resources

Podcasts:

- Join Our Table (Meal support podcast)
- Food Psych by Christy Harrison RD
- I Weigh
- The Recovery Warrior Show

Free worksheets from Centre for Clinical Interventions

- Avoided Foods handout is great

The Intuitive Eating book and workbook

Recovery Record (app)

Explore other Body Brave workshops, recovery sessions, and treatment groups

Questions?



Thank You!

Please take a moment to complete our
feedback survey

email: info@bodybrave.ca