

To Cheat or To Treat?

We all know the deal. You're doing good, you're eating right, everything is going according to plan. Then you're at work and someone brings in cake for a co-workers birthday. You can't skip the celebration right? So you cheat. You have the cake. Because you had the cake you decide that today is a wash and you go out to pizza for dinner and finish the day with ice cream. When you wake up the next day you feel bad because cheating makes you feel like a failure. But what if there was another way? Well, I propose that there is.



I know that the words cheating and dieting go hand in hand. There are even whole eating plans that revolve around it, they have a cheat day built in. The 80/20 plan says you only need to make good choices 80% of the time. The meal logging app I use tells me constantly that "I don't have to make 100% good choices all the time". It is as if we've given up before we've begun. We can't possibly live without cheating. But what would we think of someone who used that thought process in ANY other

area of life? What would we think of the student who didn't cheat on 80% of their tests, the businessman who didn't cheat on 80% of his business deals? We'd call them pretty major cheaters is what we would do!

Cheating isn't a good thing. Cheating is something you do when you're desperate. Cheating is what happens when you think there is no other way to get you need. Cheating is a negative action and when we do it we think negatively about ourselves.

Let me give you another scenario. You go into work and someone has brought cake for a co-workers birthday. You consider the day and plan accordingly. When the time of celebration comes you purposefully choose to celebrate and have a small piece of cake and enjoy the party. After that purposeful treat you are back to your purposeful plan of good choices for the rest of the day. You wake up the next day feeling good, not suffering from residual guilt. You didn't cheat. You made a purposeful decision and stayed in control.

Do you see the difference? When you think of cheating you are going to tend to over-indulgence. You will be thinking of the whole experience in a negative and unhealthy light. That will make you feel out of control. But when you purposefully choose to treat yourself then you are in control. You are thinking about what you are doing and planning for it. You will make better choices because you are in control.

There is more to this thought process than just taking control over your thought process when you have a very "unhealthy" treat like a regular piece of cake or ice cream though. You need to know how to treat yourself in a healthy way too, then the "unhealthy" foods won't be tempting as often. We have to be honest with ourselves and know that even with the right mindset, eating cake and ice-cream everyday or even a few times a week is not the best plan. You have to find healthy alternatives that you love. Things you can have everyday that feel indulgent that won't derail your healthy lifestyle.

When you learn to treat yourself to wonderful, healthy indulgences, the unhealthy ones will not be a daily temptation. You won't feel deprived so you won't be tempted to cheat. That is how I managed my recent vacation where there were sugary treats around me daily. I had my own indulgent healthy treats ready to enjoy and I didn't feel even the slightest bit tempted to make poor choices. And when the planned outing to an ice cream parlor came, I had one scoop of ice cream that I enjoyed without guilt because I knew that I was making good choices the rest of the time.

I hope you will remove the thought of cheating from your mindset. It is a self-defeating thought process that you wouldn't allow yourself in any other area of your life. You are not a cheater. You have the ability to control your eating choices. Choose to treat yourself well.