

Sensory Delights

Get Real

by

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Cold turkey, hold the sugar; addict swears off sweet stuff

In the wee hours of Jan. 1, I made an unplanned and drastic New Year's resolution: no more sweets. I've gone cold turkey.

Was this a reaction to some alcohol-induced double dare? No. *Drinking* is not my problem. The hard-core truth is ... I am a sugar addict, powerless over my intake of intoxicatingly delicious goodies.

Initially I was a social sweet-tooth - a little something after dinner,

a box of Milk Duds at the movie theater. Eventually, I was doing the unthinkable: eating cookies alone.

And once started, I couldn't stop. Going to the cabinet for a nip ... er, a nibble, inevitably led to an uncontrollable indulgence of several sugary snacks.

At restaurants, I surreptitiously perused the dessert menu to plan my caloric strategy before ordering dinner. And no matter how full, I never

turned down a hedonistic hit of whipped topping.

Nobody recognized I was spiraling out of control. I cleverly shopped for decoy vegetables, fooling even my closest friends that I was a strictly healthful eater.

But just past midnight, as the Gregorian calendar reset, I hit rock bottom.

Our friends' party culminated in a late-night feeding frenzy of Harvey Wallbanger cake, chocolate chip cookies, peanut M&Ms and those little heart-shaped cinnamon Red Hots. (You shouldn't mix your desserts.)

Within hours I sincerely regretted my gluttony, strung-out on carbohydrates and curled up on the couch with a growing onslaught of stomach pains. Suddenly, it came to me so clearly - I am a junkie.

The only difference between me and your average heroine addict is I can get my fix *inside* the

corner market.

And I know I'm not alone. For some it's the salty crunch of an entire bag of potato chips. For others, the 800 glorious grams of caffeine delivered in a pot of hot coffee or several large sodas. No matter, they all offer high potency, mood-altering chemical chains that satisfy both physical and psychological desire.

Crashing from the drop in blood glucose, I found myself contemplating the potentially serious health ramifications associated with such poor eating habits. The price for my decadence could be astronomical.

Right then and there, I decided to get clean.

I'm taking this new directive seriously. I've even started a journal to mark progress on my way to recovery:

DAY 1

Powered by beginner's enthusiasm, the first 12-hours were a slam-dunk. Midday, I was hijacked by the most devilish craving for Rice Crispy Treats but ate a carrot instead. This one-day-at-a-time thing really works!

DAY 2

OK, I probably imagined last night's DTs. But today's colossal headache is definitely diminishing my fortitude. At the grocery store, my husband stood in the cookie aisle asking me which ones looked "yummiest." I politely reminded him that I'm not eating sugar. He acknowledged this with a shrug and bought a box of our favorite thin chocolate wafers. Living with a chocoholic isn't going to help.

DAY 3

I'm so exhausted; I feel like an Epstein Barr patient on Quaaludes! Sleep - I need sleep. That, or some energy-boosting carbs, preferably simple sugars. (A fistful of Red Vines would do nicely.)

DAY 4

Why am I doing this again?

DAY 5

I could have saved Ivan Pavlov a lot of dog food. Humans drool, too. My conditioned response to the control food is distinct and immediate. A friend offered me a home-baked peanut butter cookie, which I managed to graciously decline only after choking back copious amounts of saliva.

Fortunately I haven't tumbled from the wagon yet, although I am occasionally teetering off the back and tempting treats yank viciously at my thread-thin self-control.

My contention is, the first three letters in "diet" reflect the true essence of the word and, truth be told, some moments I would give my left arm for a big, gooey Cinnabon.

But already I am reaping the rewards of my effort. While I did not reform specifically to lose weight, those surplus holiday pounds are rapidly dropping away. Let's face it, that's a pretty shiny silver lining.

Plus, after keeping this New Year's resolution for a few months, I'm sure it will be safe to once again enjoy a little splurge here and there.

All this hullabaloo didn't lead you to believe I was quitting sugar for good, did it? Think me a fool but no doubt my abstinence is temporary. My gastric muse cannot be banished forever!

And if I spend a lifetime in and out of rehab for the pleasure of my favorite sweets, they will both be, well ... my just desserts.

Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen is the author and illustrator of the children's book *Look Who Lives in the Desert!*, a humorous-but-educational look at desert wildlife. It's available at all book retailers, including Gridleys of Fountain Hills.

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NEELY'S DINER

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