**Day 32**

**Title: I’ve Got Some Food to Sell Ya’**

We like to think we’re in control of the decisions we make. After all, we’re responsible, hard-working adults, right? It turns out, we’re not as in control as we think. And when it comes to the choices we make about food, there are plenty of outside forces trying to influence our decisions. We’re all susceptible to advertising, marketing, and other techniques people and companies use to get us to buy more of their products. When that product is something like soap or garbage bags, the damage done if we succumb to a sales pitch isn’t so bad. But when that product is food or beverages, succumbing can cause some damage to our waistlines and even our health. That’s because researchers have found what you probably already know: if you buy a food or beverage, you’re probably going to eat or drink it.

There are many different ways food sellers get us to buy and keep buying their products. Some of these methods include:

1. Advertising: Commercials and other ads for food create an unconscious desire for that food. Researchers have found that when we watch a commercial or see a picture of delicious-looking food, we start to think we’re hungry, even if we’re not. That hunger often leads us to eat. Researchers have also found that seeing food commercials while watching tv leads us to eat more snacks than we would if we didn’t see food commercials. Even if these snacks are healthy, they can still add unnecessary calories to our diets.
2. Making food abundant: You don’t have to go far to find food these days. In one study of over 1,000 non-grocery stores and businesses across the country, researchers found that 41% sold snack food. This means in almost half of the stores you go into, there are high-calorie foods tempting you to indulge.
3. Combo meals: Fast food restaurants have made it much easier to order food with their pre-designed combo meals. Unfortunately, they’ve also made it much easier to order more calories, fat, and sugar than we need, and sometimes even more than we want. Researchers studying how people order have found that when people buy their food individually instead of from a combo meal, they often order smaller sizes of drinks and fries. But combo meals often give a price discount, leading us to buy more than we want, and certainly more than we need.

**Getting wise to the tricks**

Now that you know how the people selling you food are trying to get you to buy more (and therefore, eat more), how do you take back some of the control?

1. Use commercial breaks as a chance to leave the room. Instead of letting the food advertisements tell you you’re hungry when you just finished dinner, get up and leave the room. Just make sure you don’t walk into the kitchen. Or, mute the tv and use the break as a short time to stretch your legs, do a yoga pose or two, or even straighten up a bit.
2. Practice saying “I don’t\_\_\_” when faced with food, food, everywhere. When you’ve been running errands all day and you’re getting tired and a little hungry, it can be really easy to grab a soda and a candy bar at the hardware store. Telling yourself “I can’t have that, I have to eat something healthy” will be a pretty weak excuse at that moment. Instead of saying “I can’t,” try saying to yourself, “I don’t” as in “I don’t eat candy bars before lunch.” Or make it a broader statement, and tell yourself “I don’t eat snacks that I don’t make myself.” Saying “I don’t” is a much more empowering statement than “I can’t.”
3. Just say no to value meals and jumbo, ginormous, mega anything. $1 for 64 oz. of soda?!? Sign me up, right? Eh...think again. That super large, super cheap drink may seem like a great bargain, but even if you don’t drink the entire gallon, you most likely will drink more than you really need or want. Go for the option that’s closest to one serving. Instead of combo meals, order items individually and get the healthier size. If passing up that bargain is hard to do, think of your individually ordered meal as outsmarting those sales tricks.

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