

Are the Messages from the Media Stronger than the Strongest Woman? **By Debi Silber, MS, RD, WHC The Mojo Coach®**

Why is it that some of the strongest women battle with their best intentions when it comes to healthy eating? For many, the answer can be found in how we react to the many messages we see and hear.

Weight loss is an over 30 billion dollar industry. We spend money on programs, pills and promises yet as a nation, we're bigger than ever. While we're spending money trying to lose weight, advertisers are spending enormous amounts of money creating messages encouraging us to "super size", "value size" and "economy size." Food stylists are hired by the media to create perfect presentations of some of the foods highest in fat, sugar and calories available to us today. If that weren't enough, the women seen eating these foods are typically model thin. So if our goal is to eat healthier, why do we fall prey to the messages of mouthwatering meals, decadent desserts and sinful sweets we see and hear?

For many women, eating a highly restrictive diet is the cause. The more we restrict ourselves from enjoying foods we love, the more we begin to crave those same foods. The more we crave the foods we've decided to eliminate, the more we've put them on a pedestal only to be enjoyed once excess weight is lost. This type of restrictive behavior signifies the "diet mentality" where there are no allowances for imperfection. We're either on or off the diet at any given time. In fact, studies show that the most common reason for binge eating behavior is dieting!

The other reason women may succumb to messages from the media is when they feel insecure or suffer with a low self-esteem. Models can be 6 feet tall and a size zero while the average woman is 5'4" and over 140 pounds. Comparing ourselves to the models we see can leave many women feeling poorly about themselves. This insecurity fuels a lack of confidence or self doubt; traits that encourage women to be influenced by what they see because they feel that others must know better than they do.

A strong, empowered, confident woman can look at any message and take it in with discretion and a keen eye. She knows what's realistic for her, what she can make allowances for or not. An insecure, uncertain woman will often be easily influenced by what she sees, reads or hears about, regardless of her desire to lose weight or become fit. When these same women gain trust in themselves, their strengths and their decisions, they're much less likely to be affected by all they hear and see. When they understand that *they* are the experts of themselves, already equipped with all the tools they

need, they can simply look for some ideas, tips and information to get *their* job done, while ending the discouraging need to compare themselves to others.

The first step is to sort through the barrage of messages we see, taking in only what is realistic for us to use. The next step involves losing the self-doubt, fear and belief that others know what's best for us. With a renewed sense of trust we can begin to make gradual changes, which builds confidence and success. The more confident we are, the less likely we are to be swayed by some of the most powerful eating triggers which influence us today.



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