

A portrait of a woman with long, dark brown hair and bangs, smiling warmly. She is wearing a white, sleeveless top with a mesh or lace-like pattern. The background is a softly blurred indoor setting with warm lighting.

foodist

with **Darya Rose, Ph.D.**



Ask Darya: How Can I Resist Temptation in the Heat of the Moment The Foodist Podcast with Darya Rose, Ph.D.

I'm Darya Rose, and this is The Foodist podcast, where real people use real food to get healthy and lose weight without dieting.

Hey everyone, it's Darya Rose, and welcome to another episode of Ask Darya. Today we have a question from, I believe the name is, Kaite. She says, "Hi Darya, brain question! How do you convince yourself in the moment to make a choice you *know* will make you feel better, but the bad idea seems like a good idea? I struggle with wanting cupcakes/cookies/chips when I'm overtired and stressed about finishing writing work at night (there's a store downstairs, so temptation is really close). There's never been a time it has made me feel great, yet it in the moment it always seems like something worth trying for more energy. How do I stop myself from making a choice I already know the outcome of?"

This is such a good question, and I think it is one that we can *all* relate to. We've all been in a moment where we were just like, "God, it has been a hard day. I want that burrito so bad." In my case, in grad school, it was always the burrito. Whatever it is for you—whether it's chocolate, ice cream, some comfort food that you've relied on a lot in the past—it pulls you, and you are weak, you know it. You're stressed, and it has been a really hard day. How do you not give in to that all the time? There's one part of your brain, probably me or some version of your brain, that says, "Darya says I shouldn't use restriction, I shouldn't use willpower, but also I should choose the healthy choices that make me feel great." So, how do you make that decision in the moment when the less ideal choice is so strong?

Let me tell you a story about how I was able to do this in one example in my life. It was then a lesson that I can use over and over again. When I was in graduate school, sometimes I would be in lab all day, exhausted, and all I would have for lunch was a salad. Then I would go to the gym, work out, and burn all those extra calories. By the time I got home, I would just be starving, I mean, famished. I knew—this was when I was launching Summer Tomato—I was going to go home and work hard, staying up until one or two in the morning on my blog and writing new articles. The idea of doing that on so little energy was...I just couldn't even fathom. Often times I would go and get these giant burritos. I love burritos, and I still eat burritos, but these were massive, two thousand plus calories behemoths. Sometimes I'd tell myself, "okay, I'll just go get it and I'll just eat half," but that would never work.

One day the line was really long at the burrito place, and I did not have patience for that. Instead, I went home. I just made the only thing I had, which was kale and eggs, and maybe some carrots and garlic. I made up this kale and egg dish and ate it. First of all, it was delicious. The garlic was perfect, the kale, the eggs were very satisfying, and it was really delicious. After eating it_ I cooked and cleaned and ate, I was done in thirty minutes. I wouldn't have been out of the burrito line yet. What I noticed is that ten minutes after finishing those eggs, I felt amazing. My rational brain came back. I blood sugar went back up, and I felt great. I felt energized. I ended up having a great work night because I didn't numb myself and wipe out all of my mental capacity by eating way too much food. And that was a pivotal realization for me. I realized that if I can just remember that it actually is possible to feel better by doing this other action, no matter how badly my brain



thinks I want to go have the burrito, I actually don't [eat the burrito] because it will actually ruin my night. Instead I'm going to go home and make these batch of eggs, and while that decision feels like it sucks right now, in thirty minutes I'm going to feel better, and I'm going to be so happy I made it. This took just testing for me. I did it that one time and that was enough to give me strength to do it again. Once I've done it a few times it stops being a question. Then I no longer want the burrito. Maybe one day you're extra, extra tired and you do that burrito thing again, and you'll realize you feel like crap. You'll remember, "Oh right, I actually prefer the way I feel when I eat this other, just-as-delicious, meal, which, by the way, is faster and cheaper, and just as delicious for me." I still want burritos sometimes, and I still have burritos sometimes; but I was able to break that habit of having it just out of exhaustion, and making a bad decision out of exhaustion.

My challenge for you is to try it once. Come up with an alternative to your cookie/cake/cupcake shop. Something that you like, and is rewarding that will get you out of that hump, but isn't as indulgent of a decision as a giant 500-calorie cookie, or a giant cupcake on a weekday when you would really save up that indulgence for something that's more worth it and less stress-driven and more value-driven.

For me, the big thing was just doing it once, and proving to myself that I could do it. This was something I could do. Once you have that in your mind, it's a kernel of hope that you can use the next time that happens. Eventually, if you repeat that a few times, you can actually form the habit to do the right thing. Like I said, you might slip back. You might have those days where you're like, "Screw it. I'm going to have the cupcake." That will just be a reminder of how it feels, and it can remind you next time that you actually don't want to make that decision. You thought you did, you tested it again, but you really don't.

So, try it once. Make the right decision once. Decide what it's going to be before you get into the heat of the moment. If you're going to make a peanut butter sandwich, or whatever it is that's going to be a better alternative, make sure you have that stuff available and just tell yourself you only have to do it once. Yes, the first time is going to take willpower, but it's not like you're giving up cupcakes forever. Remind yourself that. Say, "Just this one time I'm going to do this other thing." Cupcakes aren't going anywhere, and if you want to still get one you can still get one. My guess is, if you have the experience of enough time of realizing that you can make a better choice, and that you will actually be happier when you do, it gets way easier.

Thank you so much for your question, it was a great one, and see you guys next time.

Thanks for listening to The Foodist podcast. I'm Darya Rose, and if you're interested in upgrading your own healthstyle—learning how get healthy and lose weight, without dieting, and without all of the suffering that it brings—then head over to my website, Summer Tomato and sign up for my weekly newsletter. When you sign up, you'll get a free starter kit that will teach you the basics of how to start changing the way you think about food, health, and weight-loss. You'll also get a free chapter from my book, Foodist, called "The Myth of Willpower" that explains the science behind why the "No Pain, No Gain" mantra of the weight-loss industry is the absolute worst approach into getting healthy.

So come over the Summer Tomato and sign up. We have a fantastic community, and we would love, love, love, to have you. Thanks for listening, and I will see you next time.