

This Week's Experiments



Experiment #1: All the things I love about myself

Take a piece of paper and write all the things you love about yourself. Please don't be shy or timid. If you feel you are not able to write that list, and I have seen this in group meetings, call a few good friends, get them to help you.

It must have to include every aspect of your persona. And not the usual stuff I get from women, in our workshops. Too many times, what comes first, I have noticed, is very often oriented towards caring traits such as compassion, being a good friend or mother, or a great care giver. NO, I also want the hot stuff: "I have a nice nose, I have voluptuous breasts, I am an amazing runner, I am funny, I am a super leader, I am very smart". Cover your intellect, your artistic gifts and talents, your physical features, your heart qualities and your overall personality. And YES, it is also OK to say that you are a tough but fair business woman, or you are a no non sense person, a kick ass competitive spirited cyclist! Start all features with the word I LOVE. I love my blue eyes, my laugh, my humor, my cooking creativity etc. Be bold, be generous with yourself. My wish is for your list to be very long!

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Experiment #2: How can I leverage all these assets for my own benefit?

This one is a continuation of experiment #1. Once you have found out everything you love about yourself, find a way to leverage it for weight loss or even for your life's overall success. As an example, if you love your legs, are you hiding them, are you shy about them? Are you not going to treat them as an asset? Are they muscular and lean because you were gifted by your genes and/or because you are also a pretty good runner? Flaunt them, be proud of them, and love them even more!

Start to wear dresses and skirts to showcase these beautiful legs. You will get compliments. The compliments will boost your self-esteem. You will start to look at other parts of your body and think about how you can flaunt them as well in the future. Maybe the next level is to build a 6 packs!

When you focus on your positive features, your brain lights up and opens doors to many good surprises. You have good feeling thoughts, they travel in the universe and bring you back even more positive treasures. They make you happy and a happy brain may not be so much tempted by sweets after all.

OK, maybe I am exaggerating with the legs, or the hair or the eyes. It's my job to push you out of your shell. Be daring, be adventurous, be innovative. Maybe it's time for a new hairdo, or a new eye makeup style to get them even more beautiful. And if you are more body modest, or not as vain as me, why not focus on your intellectual and personality traits?

- You are a very able organizer at the office. But a disaster when it comes to planning your meals. Please, transfer this skill into your personal life!
- You are a very good and caring friend, and you have many. They like your company. Find one or two who will support YOU in your new health quest by going with you to the gym, or walking once a week together etc.
- You are an amazing cook, but not the healthiest. Well, embark on a new mission to "healthify" all your favorite dishes
- You are very good with managing your family budget. Reflect on the discipline and attention you have while accomplishing this. Why couldn't you transfer this skill to your weekly calorie budget?

You are moving your positive energy into a new endeavor that gets you creative, stretches your limits and pushes you to change. You can start with a small step. A client of mine really loved to bake and also eat what she cooked. She knew it had to stop and she was very sad about it. I also had told her she could not turn to plant based and sugar substitute low calorie recipes because this would continue to encourage her to eat "sugary things". So instead she learned to become creative with vegetables, not just with the recipes, but making a tomato tart look like a piece of art for instance. She continued to use her molds and crafts but became a veggie cooking artsy guru.

So find something to focus your positive energy towards your new life style! Just one thing to start, promised? And every morning when you leave the house, smile at yourself in the mirror and give yourself a compliment.

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Experiment #3: Eating after an emotional moment!

This one is a tough one. Because I will ask you to do exactly the reverse of everything I teach you. Next time you have an emotional moment, go to some comfort food, your favorite ones, or anything else that is available. You know in these moments, you are capable to go back in the trash can where you had thrown all these candy bars away or scavenge the office fridge! It is that bad, right? I am not asking you to do this after a very tough and traumatic moment of course. Choose a mild emotion like a small fight, a mild anxiety about going to a party with strangers because you are shy. It could even be a joyful emotion.

You are going for whatever food you can find. Maybe it is still stashed – should not after 9 weeks on the program – in your desk or a secret drawer in your kitchen. This is called the survival stash. Please if you can, observe yourself as you eat. Try to become the observer of the event. What would you write about yourself if you were looking at yourself at that moment?

- How savagely do you unwrap this chocolate bar?
- How quickly do you gulp down these nachos?
- Do you even bother to chew, to taste, to enjoy, to realize what you are actually eating?
- How do you feel after the event?
- What have you learned that you were not aware of about yourself?
- Was it worth your sabotaging your new health quest? Rate it on a scale from 10 to 0. Ten being the best experience that leads to no regrets, the food was amazing. A zero being it was crap food, what was I thinking!
- Is the emotion gone, solved, and dealt with objectively after the eating event?
- Have you taken steps to address your needs and find solutions?

This experiment is another opportunity to become more aware of your behaviors when an emotion strikes. What would your best friend's advice be in that moment?

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Experiment #4: The 'let's get over it' 5 seconds rule

This is a different experiment now, we are switching gears. We are highly recommending that Experiment #4 comes after Experiment #3. I have been asking you to spend a lot of time in this book looking at your own belly button. And this was the purpose. Once you have identified your emotions and they are showing up, and you may not be ready yet with a short or long term solution, here is the 5 seconds — OK it could be 10 seconds — solution: **get over it**. Deal with it later. Do not go to the honey jar.

Repeat after me: I count 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5, and then I move over. It will pass, and certainly food will not solve it. After the 5 seconds, if still struggling, you can either use the breathing technique or the visualization method, but you may be too distraught. So here is what you do. After the count to 5, if still unresolved, you can talk to yourself as if you were your best friend, or your Jiminy cricket! Here are a few examples of self-talk, you have to create your own self talk motivational sentences or quotes:

- It will pass
- It's gone already
- Food will not solve the issue. Food is not the answer
- Food will bring even more emotions
- Get over this_____ (name the emotion), it is just an emotion, it is not real. And then move on
- I am a tough girl
- I love myself, more than this cookie
- Snap out of it
- Create your own!

This is a simple method to get over a tough situation. It is not worthwhile to let the emotion pummel you and push you down into food hell. I am not saying you deal with the issue this way, and only this way, but it is a good short term solution.

This allows you to park the emotion on the side, take your distance from it, and come back to it with a clearer, more impartial, almost detached mind later. Write about it in your diary.

You will be surprised at how successful you will be.

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Experiment #5: The power and joy of doing something different

Your brain is accustomed to your habits. This is the way Joy reacts, when she is sad. This is what Elizabeth does when she feels lonely. When you start to behave differently, it gives your brain a moment of confusion. The usual path is not followed, a new circuit is used. It's like being an elliptical machine aficionado, and all of a sudden switching to biking. New muscles, new move... This is what your trainer tells you to do when you feel you are stuck in an exercise rut and see no progress anymore.

Aha, says the brain, something different is occurring. So instead of cuddling your old favorite pillow while licking an ice cream cone next time you are upset, do something different. Forget about positive thoughts, mini meditation and so forth. Just do something unusual. For instance start coloring a book, or if it's still daytime, take your car and go for a walk somewhere you never went before - that little street, this unknown park in your neighborhood you never explored, this coffee shop that just opened.

You cannot go to a usual distracting habit, such as going to exercise, or calling a friend, or taking a bath. It has to be something YOU HAVE NEVER DONE before. And I am not talking about trying a new ice cream flavor! The purpose of this experiment is to surprise your brain and yourself. By doing so, you will deal with the emotion in a total new way. Your brain will forget about the emotion, because it will be too busy DISCOVERING something unknown. Your brain will register a new path in the park, views it has never seen, a coffee shop setting and menu it has never read. Of course, make a healthy choice!

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Experiment #6: Experience your emotion(s)

In this experiment, we are doing the exact opposite of Experiment #5. We want you to try to simply experience your conscious phenomena without self-judging, labeling, critic, or attaching any importance to the emotion or sensation.

We are staying in the emotion. Observe your emotion. Say to yourself:

*"This is just what my body and mind are doing right now,
it's not good nor bad, it just is."*

This will help you develop better distress tolerance and mastery of psychological experiences. This will calm you down and open new insights into your personality.

When I am myself anxious about the future, I stop in my tracks and observe my anxiety. I express the why I am anxious (already a big step) and then I look at it with a calmer eye as I write down the reasons I am anxious. As I write them down, most of them lose their sense. The situations I fear have not taken place, they are a scenario I have built in my head.

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CogniDiet® Book Club Discussion Guide

This week is all about your emotions. Try to become more rational and objective about them by identifying their sources. Not always easy I know. Again this book is not pretending to solve these issues. This chapter is here to at least give you a couple of shorter term alternatives to deflect the reaction from eating to doing something about it.

This can be a touchy group discussion, as some of you may not feel very comfortable about opening up about deep issues. Just do and share what you can. Anyhow, *The Answer is Never in the Fridge!*

- **What have you discovered about yourself this week? What do you love about yourself – please share this list. I also recommend that you ask each friend to say what they love about you. It is very enlightening and encouraging to hear other women support their friends with nice words.**
- **Have you even realized what emotions you went through?**
- **What were your first responses? Did you go for food? What type of food?**
- **Did you use the 1 to 5 snap out of it trick?**
- **Have you created a new plan to deal with emotions, short and longer term? Share if you feel like it**
- **How is the weight loss going? Challenges, new obstacles? Are you cruising? Do you need encouragement?**

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