

Healthier Sources of Pleasure

How to use this card:

Pass this card around. Each person please state your name and read a small section of the content.

Concept 13: Healthier Sources of Pleasure

Alternatives to food, drink, or drugs that trigger your sense of pleasure

People who have dependent relationships with any food or drink that changes how they feel are not experiencing pleasure and comfort in the ordinary, healthy way. They experience false emotions, bad and good. It's hard for people with normal wiring and biochemistry to imagine the discomfort and desperation of the person who lives in a body that can't regulate itself or get comfortable. Whether for genetic or acquired reasons, some people return over and over to food or substances that artificially stimulate the brain's pleasure centers, looking for relief from the inability to feel normal pleasure.

The concept of healthier sources of pleasure calls on us to experiment with new ways of feeling normal comfort. Eating foods that help us feel comfortable in our own skin is just one example. For some it might be socializing, dancing, or cooking with friends. This concept calls us to the family table where we can make satisfying human connections. Any relationship or group experience that helps you feel valued, understood, and connected can provide an alternative to foods and substances as a source of pleasure. At Suppers we have found creativity to be so profoundly healing that we have built opportunities to create into the flexible structure of the Suppers programs. We have removed all profit motive; the creative energy is focused entirely on personal healing. We invite you to use our ideas, download our literature, and create your own groups.

[Jay's Story: Mindful About My Brain](#)

Let me invite you into my process. I started attending Suppers two years ago because the health coach provided by our insurance company said the program offered exactly the kind of social support I needed to stop prediabetes from moving into diabetes. I already knew how to cook and I already had a good idea of what to eat, but I wasn't disciplined or mindful. After two years of on-again off-again intentional eating and encouraging but not spectacular changes in my lab work, something clicked. I was attending various kinds of Suppers meetings, and once I dug into the brain health meetings, the click came and I turned a corner.

I did not want to sabotage all my hard work by giving in to impulses that led me to mindless eating. I had started food journaling, and it turned out to be a great motivator for me because I could see in black and white what might be missing, maybe vegetables or healthy fats. Or I could distinguish treats from triggers. For me what was really motivating was that I became totally honest when I wrote things down. If I am keeping track of all that I eat and drink, I will not binge on cookies or ice cream or candy. It is as simple as that.

The better I got, the easier it was to work together as a family to decide not to have triggering foods in the house. Ice cream is a trigger for all of us. If we have ice cream, we have to go to a shop to eat it. Something that would be a trigger if we kept it in the house is a treat if we limit it by going out.

I have always loved to be outdoors and I love to be moving. It wasn't hard for me to consciously embrace outdoor activity as a healthier source of pleasure. I added more exercise to my routine. It improves my sleep and helps with mood and energy. I use a glucose meter to check my blood sugar regularly. I know some people don't want to prick their fingers to measure their blood sugar, but I loved getting the hard data.

I could see that the people whose mindful behaviors were best reinforced were the people who facilitated their own meetings. By providing this service, I could actually get more information and more support for myself. Added responsibility turned out to be highly motivating too. I love to cook and I love to cook for people who appreciate the food. I come from a large family, so the Suppers principle of restoring family tables was gratifying for me. Since the members of my family all had the same basic needs for adding whole foods and subtracting processed foods, the nurturing of the family table became more important than ever.

I'm thrilled. I have discovered some of my own solutions to my health challenges. I've lost weight. I sleep better and have more energy. With each incremental improvement, I have the wherewithal to do more. My mind and my brain are working together, my mind making better decisions and my brain making it easier to make better decisions as I increase the distance between me and my old mindless and triggering behaviors.

“Suppers for Brain Health” probably doesn’t need to be a separate meeting, but the people who attend find it highly motivating to be living brain-protective and mindful lives. It’s lovely to watch the feedback loop working both ways: the mind supports the brain and the brain supports the mind.

Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers concept of Healthier Sources of Pleasure.

Identify a source of pleasure for you that has nothing to do with food, drink, drugs, or harmful behaviors.

Discussion Prompts: Each person select a prompt that works for you.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with one being there is no source of pleasure you use to fix your feelings that works as well as food and 10 being there are things you adore doing that rival food for giving pleasure, where do you fall?
- Who is likely to support you in pursuing healthier sources of pleasure?
- Who in your family or group of friends will likely pull you into behaviors you would prefer to stop?

Ideas for Next Steps:

Experiments and Observations

- What’s your style? Are you more likely to find pleasure in a solitary or social activity?
- Test your theory. Select an activity that you suspect will help you feel contentment. Schedule it. Notice what it feels like to anticipate the event and share it with a Suppers friend.
- Test your theory. Do the activity. Notice if in fact the activity provided a sense of contentment.

Between Meetings:

- Read how other Suppers members related to this concept.
 - For people who are stressed by cooking, read [Camille’s story](#) page 197 in the 2nd edition of *Logical Miracles* and on the Suppers website.
 - For parents, read [Isabelle’s story](#), page 203 in the 2nd edition of *Logical Miracles* and on the Suppers website.
 - For ideas about healthier sources of pleasure, read [Leslie’s story](#), page 200 in the 2nd edition of *Logical Miracles* and on the Suppers website.