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Adding your brain to weight-loss formula Therapist raps stars selling diets

Cambridge hypnotherapist Jean Fain focuses on "mindful eating" in her YouTube videos offering dietary advice.

After 15 years as a psychotherapist and hypnotherapist in Cambridge and Concord, Jean Fain has taken to the Web to spread her message far and wide: Don't listen to celebrities who endorse weight-loss programs.

According to Fain, public figures like Oprah, Valerie Bertinelli, and Kirstie Alley are doing the public a disservice by implying that their weight-loss programs are the key to losing those pesky pounds - and keeping them off.

In her most recent video posted on [YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) - "Why a Twinkie?" - Fain challenges the perception that the deprivation associated with dieting is a required component of weight loss.

Like Fain's first video, "Mindful Eating Trance," "Why A Twinkie?" promotes what she calls mindful eating, or paying careful attention to hunger, satiety, nourishment, and the many satisfactions of eating - from eating as social celebration to the more solitary act of eating for comfort.

The result, she says, will be less eating and lower weight for most people.

Sound too good to be true? Fain doesn't think so.

Most dieters "don't believe it's possible to eat mindfully and lose weight," Fain said.

"I don't try to convince them. Rather, I offer them a series of eating experiments: try eating a raisin, a potato chip, a piece of chocolate - mindfully.

"Most are amazed to find out that their experience of taste, pleasure, displeasure, sense of satisfaction is very different than what they assumed.

"Most find that when they slow down, they're not interested in inhaling large quantities of junk food.

"Rather, they're excited to discover that they can feel satisfied with smaller portions, nourished by better quality food choices."

Fain, a Concord resident who writes about health and fitness, teaches hypnosis and behavioral medicine through Cambridge Health Alliance, a teaching affiliate of the Harvard Medical School.

She is also a member of the National Association of Social Workers, the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, and New England Society of Clinical Hypnosis.



Though mindful eating isn't as easily recognized as, say, the South Beach Diet, author and columnist Barbara J. Rolls says the practice is "pretty standard psychological theory."

Rolls, a Helen A. Guthrie chair and professor of nutritional sciences in the College of Health and Human Development at Pennsylvania State University, said the issue of how effectively adults can train themselves to disregard environmental eating factors is being studied at Duke University and Indiana State University.

"The question is whether people can really get in touch with their internal cues and not overeat when food is all around us - in cheap, huge portions," said Rolls, who is on the medical advisory board for the Jenny Craig weight-loss program - the system endorsed by celebrities Bertinelli, Alley, and Queen Latifah.

"So many people eat because they're in a hurry, stressed out, bored, they're with other people, or just because the food is there," Rolls added.

"It would be great to get people back to listening to their hunger cues, but we've spent years not doing that. Hopefully, it can still happen."

In Fain's private practice, in which she specializes in treating eating issues, clients repeatedly say they have tried and failed at every conceivable diet.

Fain said she also spends significant time performing "anti-brainwashing" to address the "hurt and pain" in people whose parents coerced them into eating everything on their plate out of guilt over those who don't have enough food. It's much simpler, she said, to listen to body cues instead of imposing rigid rules that don't apply.

"If you're not enjoying what you're eating, it's OK to throw things out," Fain said.

"This is America; you don't have to eat the whole thing just because you bought it - especially if you've been served enough food to feed an army."

Unlike Dr. Phil McGraw, whose stout body appears on the cover of his diet book, Fain said she has essentially maintained her healthy high school weight these last three decades, despite not dieting or weighing herself.

She also encourages those who associate happiness with a number on the scale to begin trusting themselves and enjoying life now.

"I don't like Twinkies, but I occasionally enjoy cake and ice cream," she said.

"Because I eat mindfully, I eat whatever I want when I'm hungry and stop when I'm full. Isn't that what everyone wants?"

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