tackling avoided foods

Foods you Avoid

If you are experiencing an eating disorder it is quite likely that you feel uncomfortable eating certain foods. You might be worried that these foods will make you gain weight or you might fear losing control whilst eating them. You may have developed strict rules about not eating these foods and tend to avoid them.

Fill out the columns below with foods you avoid ***a little***, ***a lot*** and ***completely***. We recommend actually taking a walk around the supermarket and trying to imagine yourself eating the foods on the shelves. Ask yourself if you would eat them or if you are scared to eat them and place them on the list if there is any fear, anxiety or worry. **Rate the level of fear (0-10 scale) if you had to eat one serving of that food.** (Don't worry about ones your don't like the taste of – for example you may not like brussell sprouts – however, if you notice that there are lots of foods that you "just don't like", ask yourself if you might actually be worried about eating them).

Foods I avoid ***a little***		Foods I avoid ***a lot***		Foods I avoid ***completely***	
e.g. Avocado (in salad)	*5*	*e.g. Peanut butter (on toast)*	*7*	*e.g. Chocolate*	*10*

The Problem with Strict Food 'Rules'

The problem with strict rules about eating is that they tend to get broken and this can be quite upsetting for you. It can also be one way of reactivating the eating disorder cycles you've been working so hard to break in treatment. For this reason, we want to help you overcome your fear of these foods and help you practice eating them as part of your normal life. Some foods, like fruit and vegetables you need to be able to eat everyday and others like chocolate and ice-cream are occasional foods. *It is physically impossible for one serving of any food to make you gain weight.* We are going to help you set up some experiments to challenge your worries about eating these foods. Remember we are not saying that you will have to eat lots of these foods for the rest of your life – we just want you to be able to eat them from time to time without fear.

Food Experiments

1) Choose a food from the left hand column – one that you rated approx 3-4 out of 10
*Food:*_____ *Rating:* __*/10*

2) Plan to eat this food once in the next week – eat it in place of or as part of your normal meals or snacks e.g. ½ avocado sliced in salad with lunch or dinner
*When:*_____ *Where:*_____
*What do you need to buy/prepare first?*_____
_____

3) Try eating this same food a few times until the fear out of 10 comes down.

4) You are now ready to move onto other foods on your list.

Remember that the key is to break things down into steps. So if one regular sized chocolate bar is 10 out of 10 you may need to start by eating a funsize bar or a freddo frog and then work up to the regular bar. Chocolate is an occasional food so it may take several weeks before you've worked through this fear. You don't have to eat chocolate all the time – you just need to be able to cope with eating some from time to time without your eating disorder getting reactivated.

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