

How do the Multinationals Succeed in Addicting you to Consumer Food?

Indirect advertising

The secret of the multinationals' success lies in the nature of their advertising. The multinationals have perfected the tactic of *indirect advertising*. Indirect advertising does not focus on praising the product, but rather on creating an artificial need for the product within you. The artificial need for consumer food products has nothing to do with the products themselves. Consumer food multinationals know the poor quality of their products and, as such, seek to distract your attention from the products themselves. The artificial need for the multinational's product arises from things that have nothing to do with the quality of the food.

The McDonald's example

One of the primary reasons for McDonald's success is its undisputed status among kids.⁶ But how does it attract the kids? If you think it's the "great food", think again. McDonald's attracts kids with the games and prizes on offer. It is no coincidence that McDonald's, the world's most successful and well-known restaurateur, is the sole restaurant chain with a kids' Playland. McDonald's strategy is to get its customers as early as possible and to keep them for life. They do that with toys, games and giveaways. Food has absolutely nothing to do with it.

Kids are not the only ones attracted by side issues when it comes to consumer food, and McDonald's in particular. For adults, McDonald's propaganda⁷ advertises four basic things, none of which have anything to do with the quality of the food:

Convenience: With over 30,000 outlets, worldwide, you will be hard-pressed to find a place without a McDonald's. Wherever you live, it's a pretty safe bet that the nearest McDonald's is just around the corner.

Speed: "Thirty seconds or its free", says the billboard nearest my house. You do not have to wait to get your order filled as at a restaurant. McDonald's does not subscribe to the saying, "all good things take time".

6. You can never start the brainwashing too early when it comes to consumer food. Unlike other addictions such as alcohol or nicotine there are no legal age limits to prevent multinationals from indoctrinating you while you're still in the cradle.

7. Lately, McDonald's seems to associate itself with a permanent state of happiness – which is, not coincidentally, a feature shared by cults and psychedelic drugs – through the insidious creation of the McHappy meals.

In serving you quickly, McDonald's encourages you to treat the food as something to be consumed with similar alacrity. The idea is if you eat something fast enough, preferably some take-out on the go, you won't really have time to consider the taste, but will be satisfied that your stomach is full.

Value: You go to McDonald's because they promise to give you the greatest amount of food for the least amount of money. Their infamous Supersize meals have single-handedly created an obesity epidemic. Even if McDonald's will phase out Supersizes, the fact remains that your stomach, accustomed to large portions, will still benefit from the ridiculously small prices of McDonald's menu items, allowing you to binge eat to your heart's content.

Comfort: Indirect advertising also transforms the consumer food outlet into something that belongs to you. Your attraction to McDonald's is partly underpinned by its comforting familiarity, a familiarity purchased through multi-billion dollar advertising campaigns. McDonald's has succeeded in penetrating your life and becoming an indispensable part of it. It has acquired the status of your second kitchen, your other dining room. You feel at home there.

One reason you do not eat consumer food is for the culinary experience. I do not think that in the history of McDonald's, two people have had a conversation like:

Jane: Oh have you heard about the new McDonald's restaurant?

Jerry: No, how is it?

Jane: You've just got to try it. They have these exquisite Big Macs you just can't forget.

Saving the Self

Know what you are eating

The key to the success of the multinationals is that you must never think about consumer food as food. As indirect advertising floods your mind, you fail to register the blandness of consumer food, its chemical sweetness, its artificial flavors and the terrible damage they do to your body. The time has come to shut the propaganda floodgates. It's time to care for your self. Examine carefully what you are putting into your body. You owe it to your self to know what you are eating.

Food has two qualities you must keep in mind when planning your next meal:

Food is intimate

Food is the most intimate of all things. It is the only thing you ingest into your body. It travels through the whole of your body and engages many of your organs, from the stomach to the digestive tract. Considered in the light of its intimacy a lackadaisical attitude towards food is incomprehensible. Think about this for a moment.

You believe in the autonomy of your body. You believe in a personal space around your body that you do not want to be invaded by others. You do not want strangers or even co-workers to invade that personal space. It makes you feel uncomfortable, perhaps even frightens you and yet you will allow a soulless corporation to pour its poisons down your throat, to enter your body with its products and mercilessly damage your organs. How can you explain that? How can you justify granting a multinational access to the deepest recesses of your body when you will not allow a human being to touch you? There is no explanation. It is only a matter of realizing how you have surrendered your body to the multinationals. This realization is key, for this is the first step in your journey towards reclaiming your body, and freeing it from the perils of consumer food.

The intimacy of food means that only food of the finest quality will be accorded the honour of entering your body. You value your body too much to allow anything else to disturb its intimacy. It must be awarded the highest respect, the highest reverence possible, through the daily ceremony of the three meals.

The intimacy of food means that controlling what you ingest is one of the self's greatest acts of freedom. If you do not have control over what you put into your body, if you consume whatever the multinationals tell you, not only have you failed to respect your own body, you also have failed to respect your self. Respect the body and unleash the self. Take responsibility for your food choices. Do not allow anyone else to determine what you put into your body.

Food keeps you alive

It is not enough to control your food choices. You must know the nutritional value of the food that you eat. Educating yourself on what your body needs to keep you alive and healthy is simply a matter of life and death. This education has two aspects:

Basic components: These are the building blocks of your life. You must know what your body's daily requirements are in terms of calories, proteins, dietary fiber, fats, minerals and vitamins. These needs are

unique to you depending on your age, gender, ethnicity, lifestyle and physical condition.

The right foods: Once you know what your body needs in terms of basic components, you must learn the foods that provide these basic necessities. The goal is to have the necessary information to determine your own diet, rather than have some corporation make that determination for you. Knowing the right foods means discovering different menu choices or even developing new dishes yourself. Not only will your health and well-being see a marked improvement when your diet is oriented towards your needs, but you are establishing control over your most basic responsibility, keeping yourself alive.

Adopt the right mentality

Consumer food kills

You know smoking kills. But do you know consumer food kills as well? If not, it's time to acknowledge the fact that consumer food can hurt you in a whole lot of ways. Consumer food kills you with the bad cholesterol that is slowly blocking your arteries. Consumer food is responsible for the dangerously high levels of salt and carbohydrates in your diet. Gastrointestinal problems have reached endemic proportions as a result of this. Enormous invisible damage is being done to your internal organs every time you eat at McDonald's, damage that you can't see in the mirror.

Most of all, consumer food kills you with the damage you can see, namely fat. Being overweight puts you at a higher risk for a number of afflictions such as diabetes, hypertension and various types of cancer. Do you think it is a coincidence that heart disease is America's number one killer? Or that obesity-related diabetes is an epidemic waiting to happen? Have you wrapped your mind around the fact that obesity is an even bigger killer than tobacco? If you think a few extra pounds are just a comfy addition to the old belly, you're missing the point. Fat is not about how you look. Fat is not about being happy with your body. Fat is about life and death.

Once you recognize consumer food for what it really is - a health hazard - deal with it in the same way you would deal with smoking: try to quit. It won't be easy. You're addicted. We all are. But the key is to realize that it's an addiction and to treat it like an addiction. Acknowledge yourself an addict and start on the road to recovery. For one common feature of all addicts, regardless of the nature and degree of their dependency, is

the desire to quit. Once you acknowledge your addiction you have just taken the first step towards recovery.

Since it is an addiction, you probably don't have the willpower to quit cold turkey. The consumer food industry is working very hard to make sure you remain addicted to their products. It is hard to resist the convenience and propaganda of the consumer food industry. Finally, there's something else that makes kicking the consumer food habit much harder than quitting tobacco: you can live without smokes, but you need to eat.

Recondition your mind

The solution to quitting lies in developing the right mental approach. Here are a number of mental strategies for beating the fast food addiction:

Consumer food as tobacco

The best way to resist the multinationals is by treating consumer food like tobacco. Every cigarette is seven minutes off your life. So is every Big Mac. Keep that firmly in your mind the next time you've got the munchies and the Golden Arches are beckoning.

See the enemy

View fast food as the enemy of your body, as an intruder that has attacked your mind. Be angry, be combative, be your own drill sergeant. It's a war out there!

Consumer food as sickness

Look at consumer food and bring to mind not the associations of pleasure that consumerism has programmed within you, but the medical associations of high cholesterol, early-onset diabetes, cancer-causing chemicals and stroke. One particularly effective method of doing this is by renaming your favourite consumer foods after the diseases they bring. Rename the Big Mac the Colon Cancer, and it will not seem as tempting.

Consumer food as a social faux-pas

Another weapon for winning the consumer food wars rests in social censure. Smoking has become a faux-pas in many social circles. Lighting up

can turn off many people for a number of reasons that go beyond health issues. Smoking is just not as socially acceptable as it once was. It is time to do the same with consumer food. I'm not asking you to change other people's minds. It is just a matter of your own perception. By viewing consumer food as socially unacceptable you can pass on invitations to the local Burger King. In fact, you are more likely to develop an aversion towards consumer food.

The temptation will also subside if you treat your friends' consumption of such foods as a social negative and tell them so. Non-smokers make their dislike for cigarettes known. Why not do the same for consumer food? Make people uncomfortable with eating or even mentioning consumer food in your presence, and they won't try to tempt you with it again.

Find the alternative

Good food is healthy food

Getting rid of consumer food is the easy part. Staying off consumer food on a long-term basis requires finding an alternative. Otherwise, you'll go back to the same old thing.

What sort of food do you need to keep your self in tip-top shape? First, you need food that will make your body feel better. Few people in North America do not know that fruits, vegetables and grains help their bodies. The problem is that your mind also desires pleasant sensations. Your mind also wants to enjoy the food that you eat: the sort of enjoyment that comes from pizza and donuts. As such, most people prefer to eat consumer food, because they view the alternative as "health foods". Consumer food might be boring and bland, but health food is a term synonymous with tasteless vegetarian offerings more fit for cattle. The choice does not lie between Big Macs and Tofu burgers. There is another way. It's called **holistic food**.

Holistic food satisfies the needs of mind and body. Simply put, holistic food tastes good and fulfills your nutritional requirements.

It is impossible for me to define holistic food, because the person who makes that decision is you. Since one of the qualities of holistic food is pleasant taste, you are the one who decides what specific recipes you like, the foods and drinks that you prefer. I cannot tell you that Chinese cuisine is good, or even that a specific Chinese dish is good, because while the stuff might be good for your body, you might not like the taste. So then it's not holistic food for you, although it might be holistic food for others.