

What are JUNK FOOD Patterns and Habits?

Junk Food patterns and habits are the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that often come out when individuals become fatigued, overwhelmed, find themselves on cruise control, need or want something that is scarce, hypervigilant, or sometimes it can be a matter of just taking a short cut.

For the others on the receiving end of junk food patterns and habits the experience can be triggering and exacerbate an already difficult situation, conversation, or past wound. Eventually leading to a continuation of a perpetual argument, on-going narrative, increase in resentment, or sensory overload, etc.

Junk food is the “stuff” that we default to when we don’t have the tolerance to show up in the moment and be true to our values and principles. Junk food is also the “stuff” that we’ve learned works, regardless if it’s healthy or unhealthy, it may protect us during conflict or grab the attention of others when we don’t feel seen or heard.

Junk food can also be the unfortunate residual vigilance and behavior informed by experiences from previous trauma(s).

As an example, when we are tired from a long day at work or with the kids and we are hungry. We know a healthy meal would help but a quick handful of chips and an energy drink will get us going again. Or a quick trip through the fast-food lane will satisfy that hunger quicker.

Why do we continue to do it? Truthfully, it works in some way. Good, bad, or indifferent there is reinforcement cultivating the belief that when I feel “this”, do “that.”

Understanding what our individual junk food patterns and habits are not intended to feel shame or be judged for it, rather, it’s about understanding what are the challenges that we often experience and how can we seek to understand how to support ourselves and others when navigating the junk food patterns and behavior when they occur.

Examples of junk food patterns and habits may include:

Criticism	Negativity	Secrets
Contempt	Labeling	Ignoring
Blame	Judging	Avoiding
Defensiveness	Catastrophizing	Frustration
Estrangement	Discounting	Distancing
Retaliation	Generalizing	Bitterness
Unforgiving	Mind Reading	Jealousy
Anger	Predictions	Annoyed

As an individual, and if you are in a relationship with others, it benefits everyone involved to lead with curiosity, seek to understand, and build an awareness around what junk food patterns and habits exist and how does it contribute to the unhealthy patterns taking place. The objective is to not eliminate the junk food, rather get to know it and try to dilute it as often as one can.

The first step is to understand when it plays a part and how it impacts both the individual and any type of relationships.

Once an awareness is built, step two involves sharing that insight with others who may benefit from understanding “why” it occurs. Why is it useful for you? Translate what the junk food patterns and habits are, when they tend to occur, and how it helps – in the moment.

Further steps would include an on-going commitment to test/learn how you can disrupt the pattern of turning towards the junk food behavior and shifting towards how you prefer to show up for oneself and for others.

The practice of disrupting junk food behavior takes time and practice. Therefore, practice with patience and grace as you try to show up differently and cultivate a healthier relationship with others.