

What is Food Addiction (FA)?

- Randolph (1956) defines FA as "a common pattern of symptoms descriptively similar to those of other addictive processes" observed in the consumption of foods such as corn, wheat, coffee, milk, eggs and potatoes
- Experiments in humans and animals show activation of the same reward centers of the brain activated by highly palatable food (rich in sugar, fat, salt) as cocaine and heroin addictions (Long, 2015)

What is FA? (cont.)

- *DSM-IV*: couches FA under "Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders" which includes alcoholism, drug addiction, and gambling disorders
 - Characterized as a behavioral addiction
- *Symptoms*:
 - Binge eating
 - Grazing
 - Withdrawal

Diagnosis

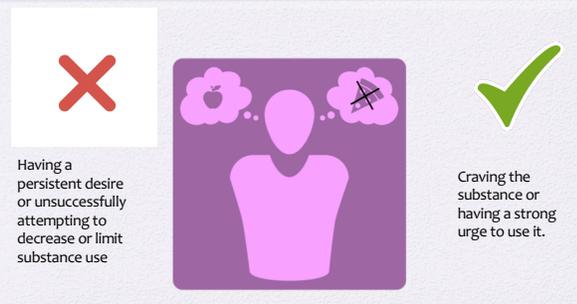
- The Yale Food Addiction Scale (YFAS) is a 25-point questionnaire, based on DSM-IV codes for substance dependence criteria, to assess food addiction in individuals
- The questions seek to assess a number of features mentioned under the "Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders" category



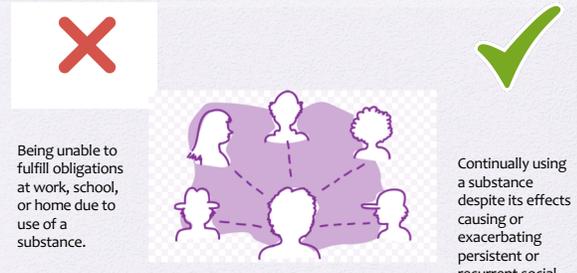
Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders Features



Lack of Control



Social Impairment



Risky Use



Continually using a substance in situations in which it is physically dangerous (e.g., driving under the influence of a substance).





Continually using a substance despite physical or psychological problems that are caused or made worse by the substance use.

Pharmacological Criteria



Substantially higher dose of the substance to achieve the desired effect; or experiencing a substantially reduced effect of the substance when the usual dose is consumed (i.e., tolerance).





Experiencing negative physical and psychological symptoms when the substance is not consumed at the typical dose or frequency (i.e., withdrawal).

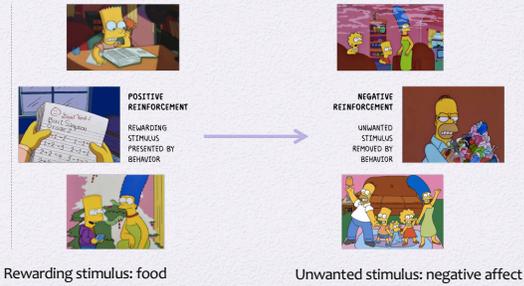
A Behavioral Addiction: Gambling vs. FA

Gambling disorder criteria according to the DSM-5 and possible corresponding food addiction criteria.

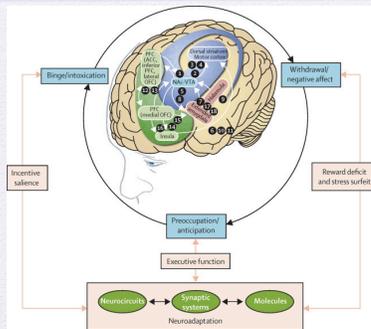
Gambling Disorder *	Possible Food Addiction Equivalents	Comment
1. Need to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement	1. Need to eat increasing amounts of food in order to achieve the desired satisfaction	Plausible, but not applicable when referring to excitement
2. Restlessness or irritability when attempting to cut down or stop gambling	2. Restlessness or irritability when attempting to cut down or stop overeating	Plausible, but hard to distinguish from energy deficit
3. Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling	3. Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop overeating	Empirically supported
4. Preoccupation with gambling	4. Preoccupation with food and eating	Empirically supported
5. Gambling when feeling distressed	5. (Over-)eating when feeling distressed	Empirically supported

Gordon, 2018

The Dark Side



Neurocircuitry



Co-morbidities with FA

- Food addiction (FA) may be used as a proxy for:
 - (1) bulimic eating disorder severity
 - (2) complex trauma histories
 - **(3) severity of PTSD and PTSD symptoms**
 - (4) intensity of psychiatric comorbidity
 - (5) severity of obesity
 - (6) their combination

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- A mental health condition triggered by a terrifying event
 - Symptoms: flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, uncontrollable thoughts about event
- Most people who go through traumatic events have temporary difficulty adjusting and coping, but get better with time and good self-care
- In PTSD, symptoms get worse, last for months or even years, and interfere with daily life

Case Study: C.M.

- A non-structured interview was conducted with C.M., a survivor of traumatic brain injury
- She describes the use of food to keep her “PTSD at bay” and how by “trying to adapt to things in small bites,” she used FA as a defense mechanism
- Food had a consistent, sedating effect to manage her memories, flashbacks, and nightmares

Take-away Message

The strict criteria for evaluation of symptoms as recommended by DSM-5 may not necessarily be useful for cases such as that of C.M.'s

Acknowledgements

- Government of Alberta, Serving Communities Internship Program
- The Antarctic Institute of Canada
 - Peter Anto Johnson
 - Austin Mardon, PhD