

TRANSCRIPTS

Turn OFF Stress & Cravings

An Exclusive Mini-Series created by Stress Management Coach, Wendy Padob for
The Sugar Switch® Podcast



Cathy Ormon, host of *The Sugar Switch® Podcast* interviews Wendy Padob, National Board-Certified Health & Wellness Coach and Founder/CEO of WP Creative Wellness

Welcome to *Turning OFF Stress and Cravings*, a new mini-series. This is Part 1, *Rest and Digest*. Today we are going to talk about two nervous systems in the body that govern stress and anxiety – and how you can activate one to get through stressful times more easily and effectively.

Currently, at the start of 2021 as the world tries to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are feeling stressed and experiencing a wide range of stress-related symptoms. Fears about your health and the health of loved ones, your kids, financial situation or job can take an emotional toll – often causing big changes in eating patterns, from low appetite to overeating and stress eating. This can result in cravings for sugar and fatty or salty ‘comfort’ foods to try and suppress or soothe anxieties and worries.

Research centered around the effects of COVID-19 has confirmed the heightened stress and anxiety most people feel – that is still on the rise. Fears about long-term effects of COVID-19 can disrupt sleep and eating habits, which can lead to further stress and anxiety.

While a crisis of this magnitude can feel overwhelming, you are not powerless! You can take positive steps forward – and learn new skills for managing your stress and eating behaviors in healthier ways. To help you do that, my special guest Wendy Padob joins me again after our highly popular *Stress-Sugar Connection* series to share enlightening information and tools for turning OFF stress, emotional eating and unhealthy food cravings now and in the future.

Wendy is a national board-certified health and wellness coach who specializes in stress management. She is CEO/founder of WP Creative Wellness at www.wpcreativewellness.com, a private coaching practice in New York City. Living and working at the former epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic, Wendy is uniquely equipped to confront extreme stress. Before she became a coach, she spent over 25 years in the corporate world as a successful communications executive and writer where she experienced first-hand how stress can take its toll. She has been through her own health journey, overcome multiple repetitive stress injuries, rebounded from disability and is deeply committed to helping others triumph over chronic stress.

Wendy believes we can make the most of stressful times, including pandemics, by learning resiliency skills for bouncing back from physical, mental and emotional setbacks that can cause us to stress eat and lead to obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, depression and other major stress-related conditions.

Cathy: Welcome back, Wendy! Thanks for joining me for this wonderful mini-series. Your personal experience and expertise in stress and stress management are phenomenal! It is such a pleasure to work with you again!

Wendy: Thanks for the warm welcome, Cathy! I'm excited to dive deeper with you into the stress response and how you can turn on its OPPOSITE – the Rest and Digest response - to calm your body and actually turn OFF stress.

Cathy: Here on The Sugar Switch® Podcast we've had many Episodes about stress and how the body reacts to stress. Let's start with a quick review of what is happening automatically in the body when you are stressed - the stress response, often called the Fight or Flight response.

Wendy: Most people have heard of the Fight or Flight response, the automatic way your body reacts to stress or danger. Well, here's how it works: when you're feeling anxious or tense, your sympathetic nervous system produces stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol, that help you spring into action and defend your body against potential threats, whether real or imagined.

But Fight or Flight is only half the story! Another part of you knows how to relax, slow your breathing, lower your heart rate, blood pressure and promote digestion. And that part is the Rest and Digest parasympathetic system, the biological opposite of the Fight or Flight sympathetic system. Now, while many people have never heard of Rest and Digest, you can actually learn to activate it and turn on calmer functions of your body; those that reduce stress, maintain balance and also help to restore healthy eating behaviors.

Cathy: Being home more, as in the present time, can lead to distinct changes in eating habits. There is a definite connection between the stress you feel and your food choices, like being driven to eat sugar or junk food instead of choosing to eat a healthy salad or vegetables. And we've already talked about the fact that chronic stress can trigger major health issues. What can a person do about it? Is there a way to say goodbye to stress eating?

Wendy: Sure! It starts with awareness. For example, if you're like most people, you probably recognize that jolt of adrenaline when you feel threatened. But sugar, caffeine, cigarettes and too much alcohol or drugs produce the same chemical reaction. So, the more time you spend in Rest

and Digest mode vs. Fight or Flight, which is the survival mode, the healthier you can become because your brain learns to distinguish normal stress from life-threatening stress.

Keeping a daily journal or using an app to monitor what you eat, drink and feel can be eye-opening. It can help you become more aware of your stress reactions and cravings – and give you back the control to make better choices in how you manage emotional distress and the foods you turn to. It can motivate you to move from surviving to thriving.

Cathy: Stress is a continuously present in everyone's life – and even more intense in pandemic times. So, there is an ongoing need to find better ways to manage its negative effects, because the stress is not going to go away! To stay healthy, it means you need to develop good skills now, and use them in the future. What are some new tips for improving self-care around stress and eating?

Wendy: Well, the Rest and Digest system is a wonderful ally to call on for help in over-coming stress and cravings. When you feel calm and relaxed, you invite recovery from stress and cravings of all kinds. Here are 4 quick self-care tips for activating your Rest and Digest response – and increasing the times you do it daily (the more the better!)

1. Create a soothing, stress-free environment where you can enjoy a nourishing meal.
2. Take a rest break before eating and set aside some time for quiet meditation.
3. In that mindful state, tell yourself 'it's time to eat and not be stressed.' This will help your body absorb nutrients in your food more effectively.
4. Smell your food, feel your mouth salivate and chew each bite 15-20 times. Dieticians say that if you don't chew your food fully, your body can't fully digest it.

Cathy: Wendy, you mentioned earlier that the more you activate the Rest and Digest system, the better your health will be. How does that work and are there any short-cuts listeners can use to stay activated all day long?

Wendy: Absolutely! Anything you do to calm down will trigger your Rest and Digest response – whether that's deep breathing, taking a walk to get fresh air or doing light exercise like Yoga or Tai Chi. That's because biochemically, relaxation turns OFF adrenaline and cortisol, your stress hormones, and turns ON your body's ability to digest, detoxify, eliminate and build immunity.

But it doesn't happen automatically like Fight or Flight, which comes on fast (like when your heart races before you're about to give a big speech). So, the more time you spend in Rest and Digest mode, relaxing and bringing balance and wellbeing into your life, the more healing and regeneration can happen. Remember, prolonged stress can take a huge toll on your body. So, finding what truly relaxes you is key, as is having some patience and practicing. As a stress management coach, I always encourage my clients to try different relaxation techniques to discover what works best for them.

Time and again, studies have shown that a daily breathing, meditation or mindfulness practice provides numerous benefits for your mental and physical health – and will help you avoid illnesses like obesity, diabetes, depression and many others triggered by chronic stress.

Cathy: Wendy, this reinforces what you were saying earlier about the importance of becoming more aware of normal daily stress, which dissipates versus harmful stress that builds up and doesn't go away. Awareness is the starting point for effective self-care.

Wendy: Yes, and we're going to actually build on that idea of awareness in our next episode. We'll discuss how you can build resiliency and boost your immune system with techniques like deep breathing, one of the most powerful, time-tested ways you can turn off stress and sugar cravings.

Cathy: Stress and sugar cravings are definitely connected, and listeners can find foundational information about this in our previous series *The Stress-Sugar Connection*. Those episodes are:

- TSSP081 The Stress-Sugar Connection, Part 1 - The Science
- TSSP082 The Stress-Sugar Connection, Part 2 - Warning Signs
- TSSP083 The Stress-Sugar Connection, Part 3 - Switch ON Control.

If you haven't heard these 3 episodes, you might want to go back and listen to them. The *Stress-Sugar Connection* has been one of our most popular series, with listeners in 25 countries from the USA, Canada, and Australia, to countries throughout Europe, Africa, Asia and South America who continue to tune in.

Wendy: Stress and sugar cravings have no borders. They're lifestyle issues you and I struggle with no matter where we live. We also share the miracle of the breath, which is always there to help you control stress and its negative effects – once you learn how to use it. Though often taken for granted, the breath is a powerful ally that can unite us worldwide in becoming healthier and happier – and boost immunity, which is really critical especially during stressful, pandemic times.

Cathy: YES! The breath has amazing benefits! I'm so glad we're devoting our entire next episode to it. It's called *Breathe Away Stress* and it will be packed with lots of practical information. This episode that could be a game changer for you in terms of bringing stress levels down and improving your emotional and physical health! So, listeners, be sure to tune in - you don't want to miss it!

Thank you for joining me today, Wendy! As always, it has been super interesting and incredibly valuable information! I'm really excited we still have another episode to come in this mini-series and I'm looking forward to doing that with you!

Wendy: Thanks, Cathy – I'm excited to dive into deep breathing techniques and how you can harness the power of your own breath to turn off harmful stress and unhealthy cravings.

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