



Taming the Sugar Monster ...and the Dangers of Artificial Sweeteners

Extracts from Happy Healthy Sober and some expert resources.

We will talk later in this book about good nutrition and the important foods for you to focus on (see Chapter 14), but first I want to address the issue that affects so many people, the fact that when you quit the booze it's common to crave – or think you crave – sugar. People say that once they stop drinking, the ice cream and chocolate is literally calling them. It's normal but can be very annoying, especially if you're hoping to get healthier and lose weight.

It's very common to transfer an alcohol addiction to a sugar addiction. Of course, since childhood most of us have been taught to believe that sugar is a treat. We have a lot emotionally invested in sugar, so when we first give up alcohol, which for many of us was our treat, we often think we should reward ourselves with copious amounts of chocolate and sweets.

We're often told that alcohol is full of sugar. Because some grapes are not so ripe, some wines have sugar added during fermentation too. For this reason, some people suggest drinking spirits which don't contain sugar, but remember that a mixer such as tonic water will contain sugar.

The bottom line is that most of us have had biochemical stuff going on for a long time. What I mean is that many people who find themselves over-drinking or addicted to cigarettes or drugs have got biochemical deficiencies. **Neurotransmitters are the feel-good brain chemicals**, and many of us are out of balance. Sometimes the reason we have been reaching for yet another drink is because we are feeling out of whack, anxious or stressed. We reach for a drink, which at least initially gives us that boost of serotonin or GABA, helping our mood. But sadly, it's temporary and while we might feel that initial buzz and improved mood and a sense of 'ah ... *now* I can relax', that's quickly followed by restless sleep and all kinds of other alcohol-induced issues.

So it stands to reason that if you are someone who is deficient in some of these neurotransmitters and it feels normal to reach for substances to help, then it's likely that if you've decided you won't reach for alcohol, the next in line will be sugar.

Just like alcohol, sugar can temporarily raise these chemicals in the body. We all know the expression 'sugar rush', and sugar along with caffeine can also raise those serotonin levels,

albeit temporarily. You may also have issues with blood sugar levels, and this is one area where you can try and take back some control.

Keep the ritual, change the ingredients

There are, of course, some more healthy ways of getting your sugar fix. For starters, mix up your styles of sugar: try having a spoonful of honey, a drizzle of maple syrup, pop an organic medjool date in the freezer – yum, it tastes a bit like a rich chocolate, really hits the spot. Grapes in the freezer are great too. Teach yourself to make some simple healthy sweet treats. Get some fruit, then whizz it in a blender and freeze it. Or blend frozen berries, add a few chopped nuts and chia seeds and, voilà, a fabulous sweet frozen yoghurt dessert.

If you love chocolate, you're definitely quids in; Proper chocolate is actually good for you. Of course, high percentage cacao isn't sweet at all and needs something added, but experiment with making raw chocolate desserts.

Just one word of warning, though. Don't be tempted in your quest to avoid sugar to opt for artificial sweeteners: these synthetic chemicals are literally the last thing you need when you are already potentially deficient in mood-boosting brain chemicals; they have been defined as neurotoxins and banned in some countries. Never opt for a diet drink. If sugar is bad, artificial sweeteners are worse.

A teaspoon of apple cider vinegar may help with the cravings. And to ensure that you are getting some great nutrients, a handful of pumpkin seeds might do the trick: add a few to porridge oats with some cinnamon for a healthy sugar craving buster!

Putting in the good nutrition

You know how most of us fib if we're asked how much we drink by our GP? Well, most of us fib about what we eat too. We would hate to be asked to keep a food diary and have to write down absolutely everything we eat. If asked about our diet, we often say 'Oh, I eat fairly healthily, lots of salads and fruit, brown rice etc', but the reality is lots of us find that days go by and we have really not had our quota of fresh fruit and veg,

The optimum amount is meant to be 5 portions of fruit and veg per day, but I'd argue that we need closer to 10. Health and nutrition is covered in more detail in Part 2. A reminder of the basics of good nutrition which is never more important for you than when you are changing your habits around alcohol.

Hippocrates said, *'Let food be they medicine, and medicine be they food.'*

So true! If you feed your body the right fuel, you will work your way to optimum health and wellbeing, and that's how you have energy and vitality whatever your age. Often when people are ditching the booze, they are trying to lose weight too. This is definitely not a

good time to be trying to diet! Your priority right now is to get the booze out of the house and the food in!

Extract from Happy Healthy Sober – Part 2

Sugar

Try to avoid sugar – or, at least, the processed stuff.

Sadly many of us are caught in the sugar trap. Sarah Roberts who wrote Sugar Freedom shares that around 200 years ago, we were eating the same amount of sugar found in one can of soda, every five days, now eat that amount every 5 hours!

4 grams sugar is equal to 1 teaspoon, so in one can of Cola, or Ginger Ale, there is usually 32 grams, so that equates to 8 teaspoons in one can!

In **Diet and Fitness Explained**, William Porter reminds us that when sugar enters the bloodstream the body releases insulin to remove it from the bloodstream so that the organs, muscles and cells can absorb and use it. The difference between natural sugar and refined sugar is that the refined sugar enters the blood stream far faster than natural sugar. This huge surge in blood sugar causes the body to release a surge of insulin to regulate the blood sugar. The blood sugar is then very quickly removed, which leaves too little blood sugar, which in turn causes you to feel drained and tired and in need of another hit of sugar. He calls this the ‘sugar crash’

He adds that artificial sweeteners do not solve the problem. In fact, they cause other issues. Your brain does not trigger the release of insulin, only when it senses that your blood sugar is rising; it also starts the process as soon as it senses sugar entering your system. It does this through taste. Eating something that tastes sweet can kick off the release of insulin. This is the problem with artificial sweeteners; they taste sweet but contain no sugar, natural or otherwise, so consuming them can cause a similar crash to consuming refined sugar.

William points out that if you continually confuse your body in this way, it takes steps to counter the regularly high levels of insulin and you eventually become immune to the insulin and/or do not produce enough of it. This is what we know as Type 2 diabetes.

The reality is that want something ‘sweet’ at least to start with, so for alternatives, look to use **Raw Organic Coconut Nectar**, <https://amzn.to/3ZWHaNp> which looks and tastes like brown sugar, or **Stevia**, (drops rather than powder <https://amzn.to/3D6nOeQ>) and **Xylitol** <https://amzn.to/3wjRUBf> a plant-based sugar alternative, but sparingly.

My current faves in this arena include **Inulin Syrup**, a good brand is Troo, <https://amzn.to/3kxKa2C> which is also good for the gut, and **Erythritol** has been voted one of the best ‘more natural’ sweeteners <https://amzn.to/3H2E6GN> (beware the ads for

artificial low calories sweeteners that pop up!) but – to stress again, as William says, the sweet taste will still ‘arouse’ the insulin!

Most importantly **AVOID ALL ‘low calorie’ ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS**

If you’re in any doubt, watch this v powerful documentary, its v old and not the best production values, but a hard hitting message

Sweet Misery – A Poisoned World – Documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toKyRlpmG7A>

Of course sometimes, it’s not ‘fuel’ of the sugar we need at all.

We simply want some ‘sweetness’ in our life!

In this video which was recorded exclusively for Sober Club members, Helena Cavan the founder of a detox centre shares some tips for great sugar alternatives

<https://vimeo.com/437667525>

Here is a pdf about sugar alternatives courtesy of leading nutritionist Dominique Ludwig

<https://www.thesoberclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/RRR®-Sugar.pdf>

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