Watch Out: Strong Emotions Hinder Your Ability to Taste Fat

By Dr. Travis Bradberry

Here’s something to think about the next time you’re feeling blue and planning on digging in to a carton of ice cream—you’re going to have trouble feeling full because strong emotions inhibit your ability to taste fat.

Researchers at Rutgers University just published a study in which participants drank creamy shakes with varying levels of fat. When the participants watched videos that elicited strong emotions—such as a son watching his father die or a man bringing flowers to his lover—before drinking the shakes, the participants’ ability to detect fat in the drinks was greatly diminished. Participants’ difficulty detecting fat was the same whether the strong emotions were positive or negative. The researchers also found that strong emotions increased participants’ sensitivity to bitter, sweet, and sour tastes.

So, regardless of your indulgence du jour, if it has fat in it, you are going to have a difficult time detecting that fat if you are in the throes of a strong positive (joy, pride, amusement, etc.) or negative (sadness, fear, shame, etc.) emotion. Keep this in mind the next time you raid the fridge. It just might help you keep the pounds off.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Travis Bradberry, Ph.D.

Dr. Travis Bradberry is the award-winning co-author of Emotional Intelligence 2.0 and the cofounder of TalentSmart, the world’s leading provider of emotional intelligence tests and training serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. Dr. Bradberry has written for, or been covered by, Newsweek, BusinessWeek, Fortune, Forbes, Fast Company, Inc., USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and The Harvard Business Review.

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