

GUEST COLUMN

Mitch Henck: Emotion foils New Year's resolutions

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"We were slow this week, but the New Year's resolution people will be back by next week," a Madison takeout and pizza delivery manager told me January 5.

Her name is withheld to protect her against the potentially insulted. In fact, one of many former girlfriends (name withheld) once told me that she avoids her health club until late January because that's when the New Year's resolution people stop coming.

I've made resolutions every year. I'm going to really lose weight this time, read all the books on my list, call an old friend, have lunch with my ex-wife and ask her why her second husband has lasted 14 years longer than I did.

Well, I think I finally discovered why the resolutions fail every time. That's right, and I didn't even ask Dr. Phil or Oprah. For many of us, discipline doesn't work long term. Desire works every time.

People who run, actually want to run. Otherwise they wouldn't run. It almost seems as though they are still running when they are standing there talking to you. When I talk to somebody who is older than I but works out and weighs 80 pounds less, I get depressed and eat a sandwich.

Emotions are driving the bus. Gee, I'm really happy. I think I'll have a leaf of lettuce to celebrate. The famous weight loss guru Richard Simmons said, "Everyone is emotional, but overweight people are acutely emotional."

When stressed out and angry, how many of us drive home during the middle of a busy work day and grill some tomatoes, onions and ground turkey? No, we are out in the rat race very close to a drive-up window. Then Satan whispers in your ear, "Oh, go ahead and get the double cheeseburger. Just don't get the fries."

There it was! A rationalization. "Oh, two sandwiches for \$5. Great I'll get that -- and save money. But not so fast. Your conscience says, "Mitch, that is more than 1,200 calories!" Time for a fast rationalization. "Oh, that's OK, I'll skip dinner." When dinner comes, you say to yourself, "I'll have a modest dinner, but I'll skip breakfast or lunch tomorrow."

The answer is to *not want* the double cheeseburger in the first place. Another former girlfriend (there are too many) told me she eats one brat a year, and that is during Maxwell Street Days. I watched her and she didn't even finish it!

I witnessed a skinny person eat half a banana! And they never finish their food at restaurants. They always ask for a box. One reason that doesn't happen for the rest of us is we still get excited when we see the server bringing our food. "Oh boy, my food is here!" Skinny people did that when they were 5.

And how about when your doctor says, "Do you want me to set you up with a nutritionist?"

Hey, Doc, we fat people know why we are fat. Send me to a therapist or a priest, maybe. We know bread and sugar and alcohol and starches are bad. *We know* we should avoid anything white.

Skinny people will say, "Mitch, I eat bread and chocolate and drink whole milk every day."

Yes, but my portions are just a tad bigger than yours, my well-meaning skinny friend.

Seven years ago, I lost 80 pounds. Yes, I didn't do bread or sugar and I cut way down on the dairy. After I lost all that weight, I took some time off from the diet and gained 30 pounds back in 10 weeks. Emotions are dangerous.

Notice how the people who solve problems and get things done are always calm. Only then can rational thinking triumph.

Believe it or not, I went to an Overeaters Anonymous meeting recently. It helps. People there understand you, and they calm you down with their love and support. When you are calm, change can happen. I don't believe many of us can change by ourselves. Asking for help is *not* a sign of weakness. It's a sign that you want to be around longer for those you love.

I'm no psychologist or spiritual leader. But if you love your children as much as I do, let's do our New Year's resolutions together and meet sometime in May for a big juicy steak and a salad. I'll buy.

Mitch is a Madison, Wisconsin based commentator, broadcaster and standup comic. The Mitch Henck Show is broadcast live 8-11a.m. Monday-Friday at www.madisontalkers.com.

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