

TRAINER STEVE'S

# 10 HIDDEN INFLUENCES

That Make or Break

DIET!



STICKTOITFIT.COM



# 10 HIDDEN INFLUENCES THAT MAKE OR BREAK YOUR DIET



## You make 35,000 choices every day.

To make these choices quickly, your brain develops mental models for decision-making, known as heuristics. Heuristics make life more efficient.

Unfortunately, this system can be flawed and can lead to incorrect judgments made with bias - ones swayed by hidden influence factors. When it comes to food, the influence is very real. Science tells us that cognitive bias influences our food choices in a number of detrimental ways, making it hard to stick to any diet plan you may have.

This guide will cover ten of the most prominent influence factors and give you ways to use them in your favor instead of letting them sabotage your diet plans.

**How many times have you told yourself that you are going to eat one way but then ended up eating another?**

**We are much less in control of our eating than we think.**

Numerous food studies suggest that people are influenced by heuristics and biases that result in diet struggle, failure, and food relapse.

As a personal trainer and dietary habits coach, I have worked with hundreds of individuals to transform their diet. I've spent thousands of hours in deep study figuring out what makes people "stick to it". For most, it starts with the influence of heuristics. I should know; I've been a victim of all of them.

That's why I've included 10 Hidden Influences That Make or Break Your Diet — 10 influences that may be holding you back, all backed by science. Don't fall victim to decision bias. Ensure you stick to your diet plans once and for all by staying aware of these 10 influences:

For being awesome, there might be a **BONUS** 11th heuristic in it for you.

INFLUENCE

1

# Your Environment

When you decide to influence your environment instead of letting it influence you, you can achieve anything.

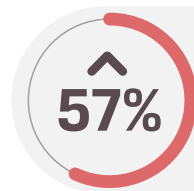


The following are important heuristics in your environment that act as influence factors on your food choices.



## The Mimicry Heuristic

Psychologists, Elaine Hatfield and John Cacioppo, suggest that people often mimic the body language, facial expressions, and word choices of others. This can extend out to your food choices and have a HUGE impact on your eating habits.



Having obese friends increases your chance of **BEING OBESE BY 57%** according to a 30 - year Framingham Mass study by Christakis



## The Social Facilitation Heuristic

In daily diary studies, individuals have been found to eat from 40 to 50% more while in the presence of others versus eating alone.

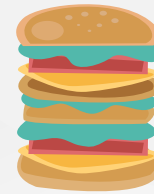
**CONCLUSION:** Don't Get Caught In The Mentality Of Those Around You. Who You Are With Consistently Will Shape Your Life.

WHAT TO DO

- Avoid letting the bad habits of others rub off on you.
- Stand up for yourself.
- Get advice from people that produce results, not those that bring you down.
- Seek out role models that inspire you to eat well
- Track your new routine on paper and write down your goals.

# Salience

“I'm on a see food diet. I see food; I eat it.”  
Ultimate Dad Joke



## The Salience Bias

An effect in which we are influenced more by the things closer to mind. This means closer in the form of all of our senses as well as conscious forethought.

### Consider these:



Snacks on the table



Beers or Wine in the Fridge



Brightly colored candy wrappers



Advertisement for your favorite pizza



The smell of cookies in the oven

All of these will increase your likelihood of sabotaging your diet goals.



## The Science :

Increased food salience in one's environment, including both food visibility and proximity, has been shown to increase food consumption amounts. Food is also consumed at a faster rate or at a greater volume when presented in clear containers or in a close eye distance.

**CONCLUSION:** If you see food you love all the time, you're gonna be more tempted to eat it. We are weak to more readily accessible rewards. If you love ice cream the way I do, you can't keep it in the house.

- Keep an environment free of snacks that you binge on.
- Remove chips, candy, soda, snacks, floury treats, and processed foods from your home.
- Don't go grocery shopping when you are hungry.
- Buy foods rich in micronutrients, like veggies and red meat.
- Get a meal delivery service that delivers healthy food.

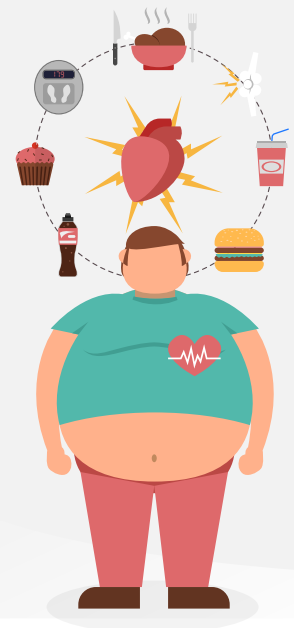


INFLUENCE

3

# The Present Bias

If you have ever indulged in unhealthy food choices when you didn't mean to, you may have fallen victim to the present bias. This is the tendency for people to have a stronger preference for more immediate payoffs relative to later payoffs.



## The Science :

A study showed that when making food choices for the coming week, **74% OF PARTICIPANTS CHOSE FRUIT**, whereas when the food choice was for the current day, **70% CHOSE CHOCOLATE**. This is why you might have to throw away veggies that have gone bad and why the snacks at work are so darn unavoidable.

**CONCLUSION:** The present moment bias explains why we tend to go for the junk food first and put off healthy meals for the future. We would much rather have pleasure now and save pain for later.

## WHAT TO DO

- Plan healthy meals ahead of time so you don't have to rely on the quick fix.
  - Decide in advance what you'll order at restaurants
  - Learn to meal prep or get a meal prep service
  - Erase choice from situations that tempt you.
  - Put a spotlight on the activities that are important to keeping your diet consistent.
1. Scheduled meal prep    2. Meals planned ahead.    3. Veggies at each meal



INFLUENCE

4

# Loss Aversion Heuristic

“The concept of loss aversion is certainly the most significant contribution of psychology to behavioral economics. **Daniel Kahneman,**  
*the godfather of behavioral economics.*”



## Loss Aversion Bias

is a heuristic where the pain of loss is greater than the pleasure of gaining. It makes it harder for us to give up things we love, like the foods we eat and the identities we have for ourselves.



## The Science :

Studies by Kahneman and Tversky suggest that, for individuals, the pain of losing is psychologically twice as powerful as the pleasure of gaining.

This means the idea of giving up your favorite snacks is more painful than the pleasure that a better body would bring you.

## CONCLUSION: Loss aversion can affect your food choices in a few ways:

- It makes non-diet-friendly foods more tempting
- It can make it hard to give up certain food identities you may have for yourself
- It can make it hard to say no to "free foods" or snacks given as "gifts".

### Practical Example:

Get a diet buddy and utilize loss aversion. Pay the partner 50 dollars each time you miss workouts or flub the diet.

WHAT TO DO

- Understand you pay a higher price for dietary indiscretions
- Put money on the line: 1. Hire a coach 2. Make a diet bet 3. Be accountable
- Have repercussions. What would it suck to lose out on or do because you didn't hit your goals this week?



INFLUENCE

5

# Decision Fatigue

occurs when the quality of our decision-making goes down as a result of making numerous decisions without rest.



## The Science :

People estimate that, on average, they make about 15 food- and beverage-related decisions each day. But the truth is, they make more than 15 times that – more than 200 of such decisions.

Now think about all the food choices at the grocery store. This is why candy bars are placed at the checkout line.

Store owners know you are more likely to succumb to impulse because of the draining effects of grocery shopping.



**CONCLUSION:** Willpower depletion is real. Knowing that decision fatigue affects 100% of us, you can use this to your advantage.

## WHAT TO DO

- Don't shop when you are tired or hungry.
- Make a list in advance to make shopping a simple "box-checking" experience.
- Get more rest and meditate more often. Research shows that those deprived of sleep succumb to decision fatigue much faster.
- Automate your food choice so that you can make a better decision ahead of time.



# The Confirmation Bias

is the tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that confirms your own beliefs and biases.



**In other words, we tend to listen only to information that confirms how we see the world.**

This is one of the many reasons there exists such a debate about diet and why we find it hard to change our ways.



## The Science :

In the 1960s, cognitive psychologist, Peter Cathcart Wason, conducted a number of experiments that demonstrated that people have a tendency to seek information that confirms their existing beliefs.

**CONCLUSION:** If you have underlying beliefs that you can't lose weight or that you have an eating problem, then your subconscious brain will make decisions that confirm this belief. This is when we make regrettable decisions and keep eating treats that hold us back.

Now that you know about confirmation bias and accept the fact that it even works on you, make an effort to stay aware of it.

- Listen to what various experts have to say.
- Be open to other points of view and new possibilities.
- Hire a coach who has an outside perspective.
- Check yourself when you say things with certainty.
- Ask if that is really true a little more often.

INFLUENCE

7

## The Dunning-Kruger Effect

is a bias in which people wrongly overestimate their know-how in a specific area.

**Dieters often overestimate their knowledge when it comes to their nutrition.**



### The Science :

Cornell University psychologists, David Dunning and Justin Kruger, tested participants on their logic, grammar, and various personal qualities. They found that those who performed in the bottom quartile rated their skills far above average. They even found that those skilled in a particular area still overestimated their skill level.

**CONCLUSION:** People are amazing and should give themselves a lot of credit. But oftentimes, when it comes to skills, they actually give themselves too much. How many times have I heard a severely overweight person say, "I eat healthy."

**If you have been struggling with your body for a while and haven't made the progress you think you should have, then listen up.**

### WHAT TO DO

- Get a professional to give you a second pair of eyes
- Hold yourself more accountable by tracking your macros
- Read and listen to a variety of books and podcasts that cover wider and deeper nutrition topics.
- Ask yourself weekly, "Have I been a victim of The Dunning-Kruger Effect?"



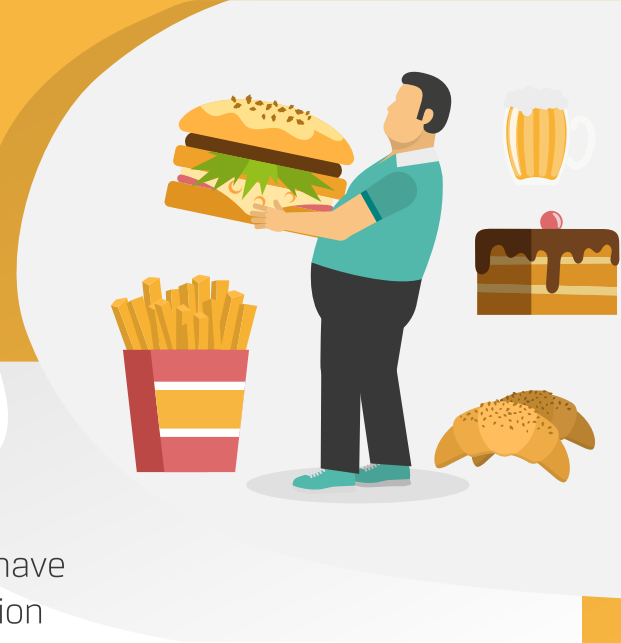
INFLUENCE

8

# The Default Heuristic

“Not to decide is to decide.”

Harvey Cox



## The Science :

Many studies have shown that decision-makers have a tendency to choose the default or standard action among several possible actions. This means that your food choices are based more on habit than on your long-term goals.

**CONCLUSION:** When you let decision-making operate from default, you have yielded all influence to a bias.

The best way to protect yourself from negative diet influences is to anticipate negative influences ahead of time. Realize that you always have a choice and that you can design a new default .

## WHAT TO DO

- Stop operating from a default.
- Utilize awareness and forethought daily.
- Raise expectations for yourself and your eating habits.
- Anticipate the unexpected. Always think ahead when it comes to eating.
- Become a habit engineer. When you create healthy eating habits, success becomes the default.
- Relearn a new normal. Eating clean can be "normal" for you if you want it to be.

# Rationalization of Bad Behavior Effect

“Rationalization may be defined as self-deception by reasoning .”  
K. Horney



Have you ever justified having a snack by saying you would work out? Have you ever told yourself you would work it off on Monday? If so, you might have suffered from the rationalization of bad behavior bias.



## The Rationalization Effect

is actually a form of protection from feeling ill feelings toward yourself.

**"Well, just this once becomes, I'll start my diet again on Monday."**



## The Science :

A survey of 4,452 adults asked people to log their calorie consumption. On average, the men and women both underreported their calorie intake by 800-1100 calories. We lie to ourselves and also justify our behavior when we do it.

**CONCLUSION:** It is safe to assume that a lot of your bad behavior gets over-excused due to the rationalization of bad behavior effect. It's a slippery slope once you start making justifications for your choices and believing your own lies.

- Don't let special occasions and exceptions become normal.
- Respect the boundaries you place for yourself.
- Spotlight your decisions.  
Use 1. Tracking apps   2. Accountability systems   3. Have a friend join in
- Focus on healthy eating, not calorie counting.
- Focus on gradual improvement of your eating skills over time rather than trying to be perfect from now on.

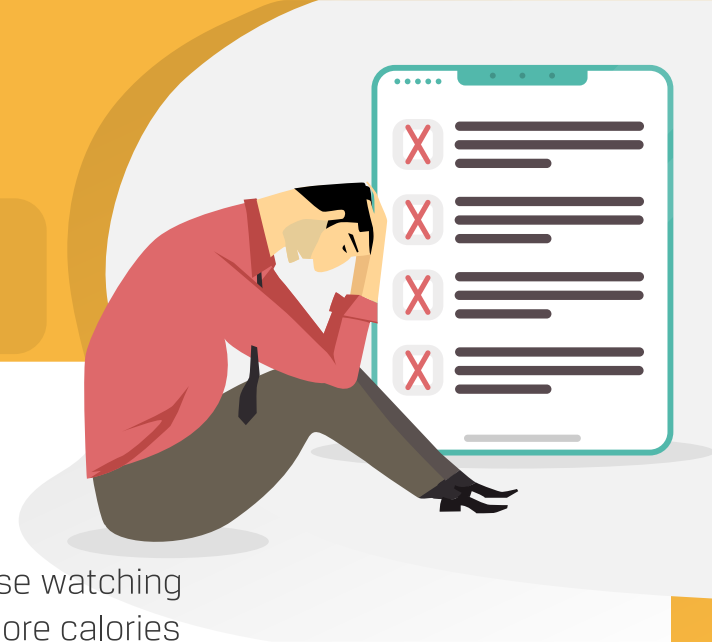


INFLUENCE

10

# The "What-the-hell" Effect

The "What-The-Hell Effect" is when you break a rule you have for yourself and then go on a rule-breaking rampage.



## The Science :

In a study about dieters vs non-dieters, those watching their weight were more likely to consume more calories after being given larger portions. When dieters ate larger slices of pizza, they ended up giving in to more of the cookies they were offered after, eating **50 percent more cookies than those that weren't watching what they were eating.**

## Caution!

The "what-the-hell" effect is a real hazard. Be aware of it and you can stop it before it takes a hold of you.



**CONCLUSION:** We obviously don't plan to screw up, but when we do, it almost seems like we plan to make it even worse.

## WHAT TO DO

- Take notice of when the voice in your head says, "What the hell."
- Create a plan for what to do when you hear it.
- Practice self-forgiveness for the mistakes you made. Get back on track immediately.  
Eat healthy as a habit, not as a goal to lose weight.
- Got Cravings?
  1. Meditate
  2. Read a book
  3. Journal
  4. Take a nap

**The 11th Influence - A bonus influence for being a Keto Influence Podcast Fan. Follow us @ketoinfluenceshow and leave your comments to be an even bigger part of the show.**

INFLUENCE

11

## The Overconfidence Effect

When we think we are better at things than we actually are.

**This causes us to take greater risks in our daily lives and can make us think we are better at dieting than we actually are .**



### The Science :

Calorie counters frequently underreport how many calories they actually consume. This also extends to portion sizes and snacking in secret. Even trained nutritionists underestimate calories in meals by an average of 30 percent.

**CONCLUSION:** We're overconfident human monkeys, and we often lie about our past. When you actually see everything you ate and are accountable to it, there is no denying the truth. You might think you are better at dieting than you actually are.

WHAT TO DO

- Understand that it is likely that the overconfidence effect will take hold of you.
- Eliminate "down to the minute" decisions.
- Plan the entire weeks eating out. If you deviate, you know you lied to yourself.
- Develop constraints for eating that stop you from common reckless food choices.
- Get a pro on your team. I'll state it again. Get a coach.





If You enjoyed  
this FREE  
Resource Follow  
Me on Instagram



TrainerSteve

Join Our Free  
Accountability  
Group

[sticktoitsquad.com](https://sticktoitsquad.com)

To **Stick-To-It** for Good