Session 8

Gluttony: The Modern Binge

(Steve Bollman)

St. Gregory the Great

" When pride, the queen of sins, has fully possessed a conquered heart, she surrenders it immediately to seven principal sins ... vain glory, envy, anger, melancholy, avarice, gluttony, lust.

- Moralia 31.xlv "

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The Issue of Desire

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be *desired* to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate."

- Genesis 3:6

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own *desire*. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full grown brings forth death."

- James 1:13-15

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An Internalized Struggle

" The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with visible creation is broken. "

— Catechism #400

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Gluttony distorts our food consumption.
It is more complex than you might think.

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Gluttony?

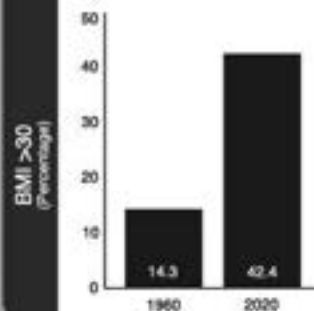**Hot Dog Champion**
- Joey Chestnut
- 76 hot dogs (and buns) in 10 minutes.
- 22,800 calories in 10 minutes!
- Lemon water fast for 2 days prior to the competition.
- Body begins sweating profusely.
- Immediately goes to lay down and sleep.
- Takes days to recover.

World Record!

An Epidemic

BMI >30 (Percentage)

Year	BMI >30
1960	14.3
2020	42.4

Source: CDC Health Statistics.

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Food and the Reward System

A Familiar Dynamic

Eating activates the reward center in the brain, releasing dopamine.

The brain builds a tolerance to dopamine.

Individuals with a BMI in the obese category show decreased dopamine response in the brain.

Alcohol: 200% dopamine increase
Nicotine: 200% dopamine increase
Cocaine: 400% dopamine increase
Amphetamines: 1000% dopamine increase.

The Brain's Reward System

Dopamine

Increased Dopamine (Percentage)

Food: 50
Sex: 100
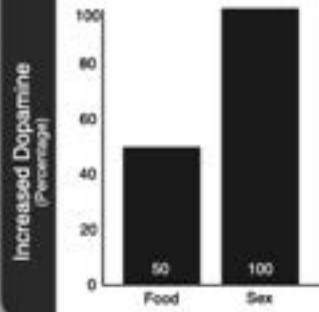
Source: Coats, J., "The Hour Between Dog and Wolf," Penguin Books, NY, 2012, p. 148.

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The Reality of "Being Hungry"

A Timing Issue

When you're hungry, the stomach releases ghrelin, which activates the hypothalamus to seek food.

Leptin, released by fat cells, signals the hypothalamus to suppress hunger.

Stretch receptors (stomach) send electrical signal through spinal cord.

After satiation, it takes 15-20 min to switch off hunger mode.

The hot dog eating contest lasts 10 minutes!
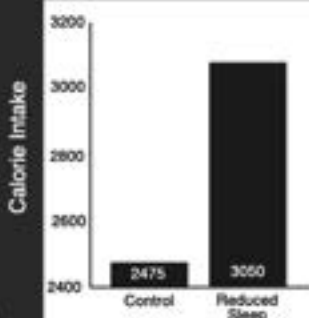
The Brain's Reward System

A Decision-Making Issue

Decision making is controlled by the frontal cortex in the brain.

Stress decreases function in the frontal cortex leading to impaired decision making.

Lack of sleep decreases function in the frontal cortex leading to impaired decision making.

"Being hungry" reduces glucose necessary for decision making in the frontal cortex.

Decisions driven by impulse.

Source: Lewis, J., "The Science of Sin," Bloomsbury Sigma, London, 2018, p. 66.
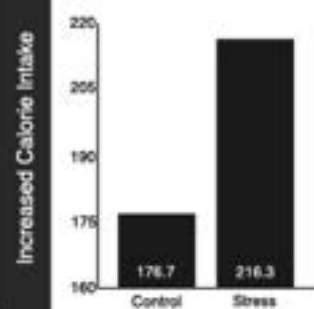
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Decision Making Under Stress

Sleep Deprived

Calorie Intake

Control: 2475
Reduced Sleep: 3050

The Brain's Reward System

Stress

Increased Calorie Intake

Control: 176.7
Stress: 216.3

Source: Spaeth, A., et al., "Effects of Experimental Sleep Restriction on Weight Gain, Caloric Intake, and Meal Timing in Healthy Adults," Sleep, July 1, 2013, 36(7): 981-990

Sources: Epel, E., et al., "Stress may add bite to appetite in women: a laboratory study of stress-induced cortisol and eating behavior," Psychoneuroendocrinology, 2001.

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Excessive Drink is Also Gluttony

The Same Dynamic
- Drinking alcohol activates the reward center in the brain, releasing dopamine.
- The brain builds a tolerance to dopamine.
- The brain receives more dopamine from alcohol than food or sex.
- The same factors also impact alcohol consumption: sleep, stress.
- Anticipation is critically important for alcohol consumption. More than ½ of dopamine is before the drink.

The Brain's Reward System

Binge Drinking
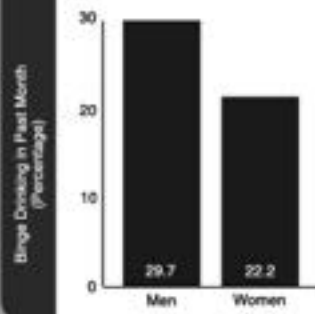
Source: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, accessed February 17, 2022.

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God as the "Stress Reset Button"

A Familiar Dynamic
- Our relationship with God transforms the stress response in the body.
- More religious individuals have lower resting cortisol levels.
- More religious individuals have a lower cortisol reactivity to stressful events.
- Prayer and forgiveness were the religious factors most related to the stress response.
- Stress reduction helps food issues.

God and the Stress Response
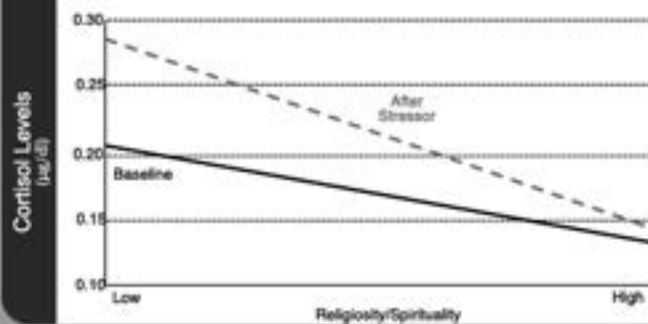
Source: Tartaro, J., et al., "Exploring Heart and Soul: Effects of Religiosity/Spirituality and Gender on Blood Pressure and Cortisol Stress Responses," Journal of Health Psychology, v. 10, 2005, Figure 2.

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Historically, gluttony relates to food consumption.
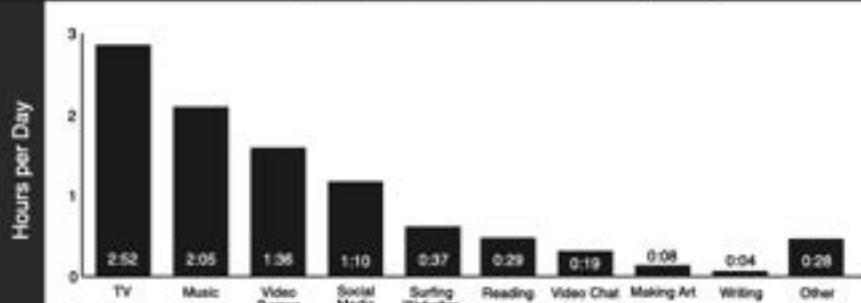There is another type of gluttony today.
It also profoundly impacts the brain.

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Binging on the Media

Media Consumption by 13–18-Year-olds – 9:49 Hours per day

Source: Common Sense Media, 2019 The Common Sense Census: Media Use By Tweens and Teens.

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Gaming Gluttony

Binge Gaming

- The Internet Café born in Korea for video gaming.
- High speed internet connects and gaming computers.
- Open 24/7 and especially attractive to young males.
- Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOG) where 100,000's users are connected online for a game.
- Gaming activates the same reward circuitry we have seen in lust and gluttony. It is addictive.

The Internet Cafe


Life and Death

- Chen Jung-yu – 23-year-old Korean man.
- Paid for 23 straight hours of World of Warcraft. Died after 10 hours.
- No one noticed until the clerk came to say, "Time up."
- Clerk called police.
- Other gamers continued playing.
- Multiple day binges are common. Deaths are not uncommon.
- Another man died after 5-day binge.

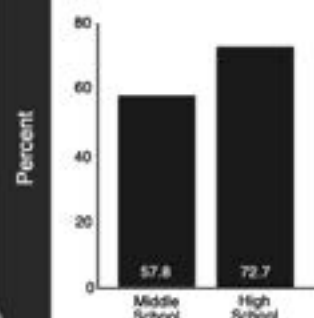Source: Taipei Times, February 4, 2012.

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Disrupted Sleep

Mobile Phone Reality
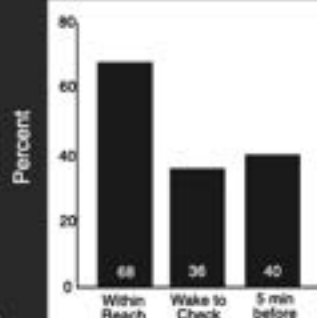
The New Normal

Sleep Deprivation

Source: Common Sense Media, "Screens and Sleep-The New Normal: Parents, Teens, Screens, and Sleep in the United States, 2019.

Sources: The Sleep Foundation, accessed February 17, 2022.

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Overcoming each of the deadly sins is challenging.

With the help of God's grace, it is possible.

Our good friend: Don Bosco

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Don Bosco and Food

The Miracle of the Chestnuts	Don Bosco	A Mortified Palate
November 1, 1849.		Don Bosco frequently stayed out late at night on business and arrived home after the boys were in bed.
Promised roasted chestnuts to 600 boys who completed Exercise for a Happy Death.		He didn't want to wake them, so he came in without turning on lights.
Mamma Margaret cooks only 1 pot.		One night he grabbed a bowl from the icebox and ate it in the dark.
Chestnuts are depleted with over 400 boys remaining.		Next morning boys asked him how he like the polenta. "Great."
Don Bosco multiples the chestnuts in front of 600 boys.		They informed him that he grabbed the wrong bowl and ate a bowl of book binding paste.
Miracle is still commemorated in Salesian Oratories.		

Source: Lappin, P., "Give Me Souls: Life of Don Bosco," Salesiana Publishers, New York, 1986, pp. 295-296.

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We must eat.

Therefore, we must overcome the challenges of gluttony.

There are practical steps you can take.

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Practical Advice

- Go to Confession immediately after falling.
- Do not eat alone. Use meals to build bonds.
- Stop to eat. Don't eat at your desk or in your car.
- Eat your meals more slowly so that the satiation response can kick in.
- Get adequate sleep – at least 7 hours per night.
- Develop a robust prayer life to reduce stress.
- Turn off the media – induces stress and eats up your time.
- Get professional help if needed.

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TMIY — THAT MAN IS YOU! — **Session 8**

- When was the last time something about your food or drink was disordered?

- In what ways do you binge on the media or technology?

- Which of the practical steps regarding do you need to begin today?