

Fun or exercise? Think fun when exercising and you'll eat less later

July 9 2014, by Brian Wansink



"Do whatever you can to make your workout fun. Play music, watch a video, or simply be grateful that you're working out instead of working in the office," recommends Brian Wansink, co-author and Director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab. Credit: Daniel Miller

Think of your next exercise workout as a "fun run" or as a well-deserved break, and you'll eat less afterward. Think of it as exercise or as a workout and you'll later eat more dessert and snacks to reward yourself.

These new findings from the Cornell Food and Brand Lab study involved two studies where [adults](#) were led on a 2 km walk around a small lake and were either told it was going to be an exercise walk or a scenic walk. In the first study, 56 adults completed their walk and were then given lunch. Those who believed they had been on an exercise walk served and ate 35% more chocolate pudding for [dessert](#) than those who believed they had been on a scenic walk.

In the second study, 46 adults were given mid-afternoon snacks after their walk. Those thinking they taken an exercise walk ate 206 more calories of M&Ms, which was over twice as much - 124% more - than those who had been told they were on a scenic walk. "Viewing their walk as exercise led them to be less happy and more fatigued," says lead author, Carolina Werle, professor at Grenoble Ecole de Management in France.

Together, these studies show one reason why people new to [exercise](#) programs often find themselves gaining weight. According to Werle, the notion is that new exercisers have a tendency to reward themselves by overeating after their workout.

For beginning or veteran exercisers, the bottom line is this: "Do whatever you can to make your workout fun. Play music, watch a video, or simply be grateful that you're working out instead of working in the office," said Brian Wansink, author and Director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab. "Anything that brings a smile, is likely to get you to eat less," he added.

The article, published this month in *Marketing Letters*, was coauthored by Dr. Brian Wansink of Cornell University and Dr. Collin Payne of New Mexico State University.

More information: Carolina O. C. Werle, Brian Wansink, and Collin

Payne. (2014). Is it fun or exercise? The framing of physical activity biases subsequent snacking. *Marketing Letters*.10.1007/s11002-014-9301-6

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