

# When 1 bite is too many and 10,000 is not enough

## abstainers vs. moderators.

In a nutshell, the difference is:

Abstainers find it easier to resist temptation by giving up something altogether.

Moderators find it easier to indulge in moderation.

I'm an abstainer. I find it very easy to give something up, but I drive myself crazy when I try to indulge in a limited way. I wear myself out with "Does this count?" "Today, tomorrow?" "Just one more." It is easier just not to go there at all.

Like an alcoholic, I am a foodholic. Just as you would not expect me to have a non drinking friend over for dinner and serve wine... I have to remember to not put myself into unsafe food environments. One bite is never enough, just as one drink is never enough.

I talk to abstainers and moderators alike about this issue. I do believe that both camps exist, and many people are a mix of both. But here's my latest conclusion: **More people would benefit from abstaining.**

Abstaining sounds demanding and rigid; people assume that it's easier to be moderate. But in fact, *abstaining is easier*. From what I've seen, many people who try abstaining are surprised to find out that it's *easier* than being moderate.

Exhibit A is my friend Beth. When I was identifying the concepts of "abstainers" and "moderators," my friend was my model moderator. For instance, her weakness is French fries, and she told me that she couldn't give up French fries, but she would eat only half an order, share an order with her friend, not order fries every time she went out to dinner, etc. Those are moderator strategies.

But to my astonishment, a few months ago, she told me, "You know what? I'm actually an abstainer. It turns out that it's just easier to give something up altogether."

I was flabbergasted because truly, she was my model moderator. And since then, I've talked to many people about abstinence, and almost all of them agree abstaining is easier than they expected, and many have stuck to abstaining in various ways.

But I know something else about my friend Beth. While I find it easy to say "No," "Stop," or "Never" to myself, Beth is a person—and many people are like this—who does much better with positive resolutions. So I asked her how she was handling that issue. Because, after all, abstaining means saying "no." Beth is so brilliant with words.

She said to me, "I can't tell myself a negative. I have to make this a positive thing. So I tell myself, **"Now I'm free from French fries."**

*Free from French fries!* That's exactly how abstaining feels to me. I'm free from decision-making, free from internal debate, free from guilt or anxiety. That Candy, the breadbasket, the cookie plate at the meeting... they don't tempt or distract me.

*It's a Secret of Adulthood: I give myself limits to give myself freedom.*

After all, what vitamins or nutrients do those things have that will sustain life?

The little treats that many claim help us "enjoy life", do they? I find their enjoyment to be short lived, and the regret is what I am left with.

So I ask --- Is your joy in living really down to eating or is your life about experiences? It is time to look at what is important.

In my experience, most people assume they're moderators. If you consider yourself a moderator, I'd gently suggest giving abstaining a try – especially if you've unsuccessfully tried moderation in the past. It might be easier than you think.

Again: I'm not saying it's true for everyone. But I think it's more true than people think.

I'd love to hear how each of can do with this next week. Would you give abstaining a try? I admit that I'm a 100% abstainer type, and that could be clouding my judgment. You wouldn't *believe* what I'm abstaining from these days!

I \_\_\_\_\_ will abstain from \_\_\_\_\_.

Before you say "This is from Sandy and she can do this I can't" know the information in part came from Gretchen Rubin and Happiness, My life coach Faith, and AA. I do agree though and it works for me