

The Food Addiction Institute

www.foodaddictioninstitute.org

To Members of the American Psychiatric Association (APA):

You can make a major contribution to solving the obesity crisis and to improving the general health of America. Food addiction i.e., chemical dependency on one or more specific foods, is radically under diagnosed and frequently mistreated. The American Psychiatric Association can change this. The Food Addiction Institute (FAI) supports the policy of the American Society of Addiction Medicine that addictions are brain disorders and that **some foods create a chemical dependency similar to alcoholism and drug addiction** (asam.org). The FAI supports the addition of food addiction as a Substance Use Disorder in the APA's DSM 5.

Obesity, eating disorders and food addiction, though often co-occurring diseases, are very different medical problems each requiring a distinct approach to treatment.

Obesity alone is treated with diet, exercise and support for lifestyle change. Not all obese people are food addicts. However, when repeated dieting does not work, this can rule out simple obesity, and it suggests a possible eating disorder or food addiction.

Eating Disorders – anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder – are treated by medication and therapy. When an anorexic, bulimic or binge eater has a history of craving and bingeing, has seriously tried therapy and still eats out of control, this suggests possible food addiction.

Food Addiction is treated by eliminating the food(s) over which there is loss of control, supporting detoxification, educating about the disease and recovery resources, challenging bio-chemical denial, and working on underlying mental-emotional and spiritual issues.

Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse assures us that the **scientific evidence that food addiction exists is "overwhelming."** (See FAI's bibliography of 2734 peer reviewed articles and the scientific review article "Physical Craving and Food Addiction," Cheren et al, 2009, www.foodaddictioninstitute.org.)

What is important for progress in this area is correct diagnosis. Treatment follows diagnosis. **Thus, it is essential that food addiction be included as a Substance Use Disorder in the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5*.** We also support the upgrading of Binge Eating Disorder to a diagnosis in full standing. Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Yours sincerely,

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