

Is Weight a Brain Thing?



Organic Dark
Chocolate

There are lots of reasons to have a food craving. Reasonable explanations we can use include stress, pregnancy, menstrual moods, a bad day, sneaky excito-toxin flavoring to increase consumption by the food industry, or no other reason than the taste makes us feel soooo good.

Gene-Jack Wang, researcher at Brookhaven National Labs, used PET scan brain imaging of both women and men who were fasting and then tempted by their favorite foods by sight, smell or taste. **(Now, is that really fair when you've been denied food to begin with?)**

Wang asked some of the participants of both gender groups to deny their cravings. PET scan results indicated brain gender differences with men being able to suppress cravings better than both groups of women.

Hunger awareness and desire for food is activated in the limbic and paralimbic parts of the brain. Men activated this area less when exerting control over cravings and were able to reduce their desire level.

Women activated the same brain area but those trying to exert self control over their cravings were no more successful than women just fasting. **Both groups of women had a greater brain activity response to favorite foods than men.**

Wang's speculation is that **men are better at decreasing their hunger center than women** which might explain why women world wide experience a higher rate of obesity and eating disorders.

Well, let's see before we agree ... we would like to know –

- What were the favorite foods?
- Is there a gender favorite food preference between men and women?
- Were the favorite foods more fat, sugar or carbohydrate types?
- Did you include men and women who are vegetarians?
- Is age a factor?
- What would be the brain activity between men and women who were not fasting, but offered their favorite foods?
... and so on and so on?

Something else to consider is that the limbic area is also an emotion center and men in general demonstrate less overt emotion than women. It might explain why men show lower brain activation since they are more accustomed to concealing emotions. Women who are more in touch with their emotions may link favorite foods and certain emotions more strongly.

So, a good option for weight might be to find a healthier choice that will satisfy your brain as well as your emotions. I understand that organic dark chocolate works. As long as it has the word chocolate in it, that works for me!

By Joyce Hansen