

For Immediate Release
900 words
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Sugar Is Not Love -- and Sometimes It's Just the Opposite

Do you sometimes wonder if your child has a split personality? Is she sweet and smart one moment, then moody and lethargic the next? Is he funny, creative, and full of energy -- only to suddenly turn obnoxious, cranky, and even mean?

Don't call in the psychiatrists. The answer may be quite simple: Your child may be addicted to sugar.

Kathleen DesMaisons, PhD., who pioneered the field of addictive nutrition, believes that by changing what our children eat, we can change their behavioral problems. "What if all our 'bad kids' are in reality driven by having too much sugar in their diets? What if it was that simple?" she asks.

"Some children (and adults) have brain and body chemistries that react to sugar as if it were a drug," says DesMaisons, author of "Little Sugar Addicts" (Three Rivers Press, August 2004). "When their need for the 'drug' is satisfied, they are on top of the world: happy, cooperative, and smart. When the level of sugar they are getting dips, however, they get in trouble. They literally go into withdrawal and start craving another 'fix'. If they don't get it, they crash -- and everyone around them suffers."

"With Jonah, two cookies with lunch used to turn into desperate pleas for more cookies or a Popsicle or -- his favorite -- a lollipop," Brigitta says. "He would eat a dozen if I let him. As soon as I cut him off, he'd have a fit. I had to leave the room because he was so irate. But hand him a piece of candy, and it was like someone flipped a switch. He was happy again."

Anna tells a similar story. "My three-year-old has extraordinarily volatile blood sugar. When she is getting 'low,' she groans and starts wriggling around. If her blood sugar keeps dropping, she becomes the most stubborn human being on the face of the earth. On the other hand, if I keep her

belly filled up with good food, she's her old self -- good natured and easy going with an awesome sense of humor."

DesMaisons is the author of two books for sugar-addicted adults, "Potatoes Not Prozac" and "The Sugar Addict's Total Recovery Program." She coined the term "sugar sensitive" to describe people whose brain and body chemistries dramatically overreact to sugar and simple carbohydrates such as white bread and pasta.

"Most parents do not know how drastically diet can affect their children," DesMaisons says. "The behavioral changes we see in sugar-sensitive people -- especially kids -- when they start putting the right kind of food in their bodies is astounding," she adds. "The mean kids start being nice to their sisters and brothers. The loners start seeking out other kids to play with. Their concentration improves and they get better grades. Quite a few are no longer diagnosed as ADD or ADHD. They feel so much better, their whole lives literally change."

Sounds too good to be true, but the kids themselves talk about the huge difference when they kick their sugar addiction. Eating sweets "made my tummy hurt," said Sasha, 6, during an online chat with other kids on DesMaisons' website, www.radiantrecovery.com. "I also wanted more and more sugar," she added.

Caitlin, 16, told the chat group she likes herself a lot more now. "I've found I'm a goofy kid that likes sunshine instead of a serious, depressed kid. I'm goofy and outgoing instead of a mouse." Fifteen-year-old Clay said he makes friends easier. "I'm not as hyper and kids get to know me better."

"The trickiest thing is having sugar at birthday parties and things like that," said Sasha, the six-year-old. "You gotta listen to your body, not your brain, because your brain thinks you want sugar all the time."

"It's nice to know there are other people who can't have sugar," Lisa, told the chat group. "When I eat sugar, I feel grumpy and I get cross easily and then I feel sad. It makes me feel like I am on another planet on my own, and my skin goes all itchy and bumpy. If I eat a little bit I want to eat more and more, and then I get more grumpy."

For some kids the negative effects are even more troubling. "Sugar makes me fight with Mommy," Ariel, 6, admitted. Fifteen-year-old Brendan, whose dad is in prison, said, "Before the program, I helped steal a car and always used to ditch. I was just mean and got into a lot of trouble."

In "Little Sugar Addicts," DesMaisons explains the specific ways in which sugar addiction affects the brain and the body, and offers parents a simple program and recipes for getting sugar-addicted kids very gradually onto a healthier diet. "By changing your child's food, you can heal their addictive biochemistry. This will change their lives more dramatically than you can imagine," DesMaisons says. "It is the most loving thing you can do for a sugar-addicted child."

Surprisingly, the kids themselves are very happy with the program. “They feel so much better and they’re so much happier, staying on the program isn’t a big deal for them,” DesMaisons points out.

“I feel really confident,” said Nadia, 11, during the group chat. Suzie, agreed. “It’s like I finally found the me I knew was inside all along.”

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