Diet and Your Inner 5 Year Old: A Rant About Discipline.

Have you ever been to the store with a little kid, and as the two of you are walking peacefully down an aisle, suddenly his eyes lock on some brightly colored piece of over-priced, plastic trash, and he wrenches his hand away from yours to sprint towards whatever clever marketing scheme he’s just fallen madly in love with? It only gets worse as he holds it in his hands and starts discovering all the super cool noise features. You’re walking after him, hoping he’ll give it up easily, but when you try to pry it from his tiny (but suddenly very strong) hands, his eyes water up with sadness and rage. He clutches to the piece of plastic like it was the world’s last puppy and you were trying to eat it for dinner. You desperately try to reason with him, but to no avail. You keep thinking to yourself “you didn’t even know that existed 10 seconds ago!”, “You’re going to forget about it in 5 minutes” and “It’s just a piece of junk!”

At some point in your past you were probably just like he was. As you’ve grown older though, you’ve hopefully learned to tell yourself some of those things whenever some piece of frippery catches your eye. You can now go to the store, see something you find attractive, and think to yourself “I didn’t even know that existed 10 seconds ago. I can live without” and move on. Or “I already have 10 of those at home” and move on.

The same sort of thinking can be applied to food. I had a conversation with a client the other day who was struggling with the idea of ordering grilled chicken instead of fried chicken. She admits that she likes both. I’m trying to explain to her that everything is going to be fine if she orders grilled instead of fried, and with an utterly dejected look on her face she looks down at her feet and says “I’ll try.”

I’m instantly frustrated and thinking “What?? You’ll *try*? I’m not asking you to build a damn spaceship here. Just order fucking grilled!”

Obviously I keep that to myself. I know that this lady is a mature woman who handles ten thousand other things more difficult than this every day without skipping a beat. I know that she is more than capable of handling her diet. For a lot of people though, junk food is what brings out their inner 5 year old. That’s not my way of trying to sound sympathetic. I don’t think this is a time to be all-up-in-ones-feelings. Emotional decisions are what screwed you in the first place. This is a time for your inner adult to keep your inner 5 year old in check, because the truth is that even if you never saw another donut, ice cream cone or big mac in your whole life, life would go on and you would be just fine. Those things are not remotely important, and ordering the grilled chicken is not going to kill you.