

COFFEE: MORNING COMFORT OR ADDICTIVE CRAP?

Rich... Dark... Hot... Bitter... Ahhhhhh... Habit Forming... Adrenal Stimulant... Pesticide Laden... Coffee.

Like it or not folks it is a harsh addictive drink. Let's not even beat around the bush, the caffeine content point, makes it a drug.

There is so much data to support either side, the "coffee is good for you" side and the "steer the hell clear" side.

From my earliest memory I can muster up as a child, until I was 7 months pregnant with my oldest child, coffee was a very dear friend of mine, a part of my everyday life in some form or fashion. Yes, from about age 7, I can remember slurping on my daddio's cup o' joe at our after church social hour on Sundays. At this time I also remember spending a week here and there during the summers with my maternal grandmother. It was encouraged by her generation to enjoy a cup after dinner to aid digestion. It was what we did (we meaning, those who are Lebanese) before bed, to relax us and help us sleep. It was also used for celebration and for mourning, well shoot let's be honest, it was always a good time for coffee time.

At roughly age 13, I began having my own intimate relationship with this Arabian Beauty. My dad brewed a pot every morning. It really wasn't that big of a deal to grab a half of a cup before school. Ahhh. MMMmmmm. Sometimes, I would come home exhausted from school and need another cup as a pick me up with or following dinner in order to stay awake for homework or get to sports practice on time.

Through my college years, a day didn't go by without at least one cup of coffee in my hand. Most days I worked at least a few hours in a coffee shop, Beaners (before they changed their name to Biggby). Yes, coffee was my sweetheart.

Upon graduating college and becoming employed with a 'real' job, I often time had 2-3 cups a day, before breakfast, after lunch and after I finished teaching school.

That's right three cups prior to 4pm. Needless to say, I was exhausted all the time. My adrenal glands were shot.

Soon after, I found out I was pregnant with my first, coffee's effect on me changed.

The smell that once acted as an enticing pheromone, now made me puke.

The taste that once tantalized my taste buds now created a distaste.

The relationship that we once had ceased rapidly and I was left, in wanting.

By 16 weeks gestation, I was able to stomach a cup every few days but it made me feel jittery and stressed. So, I enjoyed a cup roughly once a week, usually on Saturday mornings when I was snuggling with my stack of homework to grade. I would speed through the high school assignments with ease and quickly pass out from . . .exhaustion. I found myself the most tired on the days I didn't work out and I drank coffee. Hmmm, that didn't make sense but I didn't think too much of it. Everyone was doing it, it must be ok. Even your medical professional will tell you, it's totally fine in moderation. . .Meaning less than 12ounces a day.

Scott, my husband, and I started taking natural childbirth classes (The Bradley Method) when I was about 7months pregnant. Our second childbirth class was on Nutrition in pregnancy. It was then that I learned . . .coffee contains caffeine . . .which is an addictive drug whose side effects have not yet been measured on the growing fetus. YEEEEK. Hold the phone! That caught my attention. It was that night that I decided coffee would only be had after sweet babe had arrived and on very, exceptionally, special occasions.

Then she arrived, my first conception. . .my first baby - Madilyn. As if her movement through me flipped a switch on the way out. With her entrance into the world, my interest in coffee all but vanished.

Now don't get me wrong I do love all of my memories with coffee and the smell... oh that smell. . .Always stimulates memories of my past.

I very vividly remember my last cup. It was the morning my Maternal Grandmother (Siti) would transition out of this world. It was just days before a birth client, would

give birth, less than four short years ago. I was awoken from a deep sleep at 4am, as if in a dream state I went straight to the cupboard and made two cups of her favorite instant coffee, Nescafe Classico, one for her and one for me. She was on Hospice care in my parents' home and I was there supporting my mother in this time of grievance. I raised the cup of bitterness to my lips to celebrate her life of incredible generosity and selflessness. Before that it had been almost five years since my last rendezvous with coffee.

This is an addiction that I understand, as my relationship with this delight was very real.

Whether you choose to wake up with, go to sleep with, celebrate with, mourn with or socialize with a cup of coffee, you might be interested in understanding the effects of this drug on your human body.

But this is just an introduction to MY relationship with coffee. If it sounds anything like your relationship with this seductive hot drink, then continue reading.

Here are some serious, science based evidence, things to consider when You choose to maintain a relationship with this dark, taste-bud tantalizing, seductress, coffee.

#1 The Appearance of Your Smile will Change.

Black tea, cola and coffee are at the top of the charts for staining your teeth. The enamel on your teeth is in fact the hardest substance in the human body, but it is not flat and smooth. It is quite the opposite actually. Your tooth enamel contains microscopic pits and ridges that can and do hold particles of food and drink.

Pigments from these dark drinks become embedded in the cracks, ridges and pits in your teeth and can cause staining. In addition to the discoloration these stains are actually sticky and tend to attract food particles, which in turn attract bacteria which creates an environment conducive to decay. Holy Moly Mama! Do you find that you are whitening your teeth quite often and unsure of why? [This study](#) shows, coffee staining is more resistant to tooth brushing and more likely to become discolored again after bleaching treatments.

In addition to the color change, regular consumption of caffeine is related to the degradation of the enamel on your teeth. Therefore, reducing how much caffeine you drink each day can directly help protect the enamel that remains on the surface of your teeth so you can help avoid cavities and dental disease. Is it possible that those of us who become enslaved with the caffeine addiction actually deplete the amino acid, threonine, that tooth enamel is created from? Is it possible that if a mother's body is depleted of this amino acid upon conceiving, that sweet babe will have teeth without the enamel coating?

Just think about it. . .we are created from vitamins, minerals, amino acids, interwoven delicately together to create different cells, organs, tissues and systems. Could a genetic ailment simply be a missing component of the diet, passed on from generation to generation? Can we heal ailments through diet? I think YES! I have seen it work!

I was told at the age of 14 that my eight molars never received their protective enamel coating. My maternal grandmother (Siti) and her mother both consumed an EXCESSIVE amount of coffee... in Truth, that's pretty much all they drank. I only ever knew my grandmother with dentures. The majority of her teeth were removed prior to age 40. Could this be a coincidence? I think NOT.

Save your teeth from the intense acidity levels of coffee and the harsh bleaching chemicals and give that 'ole cup a joe the heave hoe!

#2 Coffee is One of the MOST Chemical Laden & Environmentally UNFRIENDLY Foods on the Planet.

According to the CS Monitor, up to 250 pounds of chemical fertilizers are sprayed per acre of non-organic coffee, including but not limited to; Thiodan, Dursban, Basudin, Disulfoton, Methyl Parathion and Cypermethrin. These are some of the most highly toxic pesticides on the planet and are highly restricted in the USA as a result. When our foods are not grown in our country however, there is no way to regulate the application of these chemicals.

These pesticides fall into a variety of classes including; Ia (extremely hazardous) and II (moderately hazardous). They accumulate in the soil and are known to kill birds,

fish and mammals as well as insects. They are known to affect the central nervous system, and cause damage to the kidneys, reproductive systems, and liver. Oh and that's not all. Since these chemicals accumulate in the soil, they make the environment that much more harsh for any living animal.

If you are one of many Americans hoping to avoid the effects of caffeine, choosing to drink decaffeinated means that it was most likely bathed in dichloromethane and/or [ethyl acetate](#) 8-12 times. Yumm-o. . .Um I think not.

Dichloromethane is toxic to the central nervous system and can make one feel unsteady, dizzy, and have nausea and a tingling or numbness of your finger and toes. Ethyl acetate, affects the respiratory system and can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, followed by headache, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, and unconsciousness. Man o' Man, because these pesticides and decaffeination chemicals are both known to cause damage to the central nervous system, this could look like so many different types of "medical labels." My grandmother's (Siti or grandmother in Lebanese) medical diagnosis was Parkinson's. . .I am 99% positive it was truly pesticide toxicity from YEARS, literally 65 years of drinking the crappiest coffee on the block . . .instant coffee.

Instant coffee is high in acrylamide, a chemical compound that has been shown to cause cancer in animals. According to the Food and Drug Administration, acrylamide can also cause nerve damage. The amount of acrylamide is measured in ppb, or parts-per-billion. Certain brands and types of instant coffee have very high amounts, compared with ground coffee. One popular brand of instant coffee contains 458 ppb, compared to only 13 ppb in their traditional coffee variety. A preliminary 2009 study by a Durham University team showed that people who drink seven cups or more of instant coffee a day are at a high risk of suffering from hallucinations. This could be because caffeine increases the production of cortisone, a stress hormone.

Siti or Sitta as I called her, often hallucinated (a minimum of 3x a week) in her last 3-4 years on this Earth, but even before that she commonly saw things that were not present.

If this doesn't sway you to ditch the cup o' crap, then at least it's a great reason to drink only Organic Coffee. But wait . . .

What is Organic Coffee?

Organic relates to growing, harvesting and processing of the product.

To qualify for the USDA “organic” label, coffee farms must have certified organic land and practices. Some of the standards, includes:

1. No synthesized pesticides or any prohibited chemical substance applied to the land for 3 years previous.
2. Natural pest control and prevention methods must be used.
3. Use sustainable crop rotation to prevent nutrient loss in soil.
4. Pass inspections and lab testing before it is made available for commercial use in the U.S.
5. No GMO coffee beans used. (Yes, that’s right mama, coffee has been genetically modified since 1998, you could be a science experiment.)

Now, don’t confuse organic with fair trade with shade grown with bird friendly . . .yes, my dear friend, coffee can be grown in a variety of measures. Fair trade refers to the way the workers are treated, guaranteeing there’s a minimum price and banning child labor and other unethical practices. They are encouraged to grow organic, but they do NOT have to.

Now what about the shade-grown, bird friendly stuff? Coffee is actually grown in the shade, but coffee growers have a tendency to cut down pieces of rainforest and pour pesticides over the beans in order to get it to grow more quickly. Certified shade-grown coffee ensures you are not encouraging farmers to destroy what little is remaining of the rainforest and animals with it.

So IF you are set in your ways of stubbornness and NEED coffee no matter what the cost . . .Look for: Bird Friendly, Shade Grown, Rainforest Alliance, Fair Trade, or Equal Exchange certification, as well as Organic.

Some popular, brands to consider:

- Kicking Horse
- Cameron’s Organic French Roast
- First Colony Rainforest Blend

- Equal Exchange Organic Coffee
- Guatemalan
- Jim's Organic Coffee Sweet Love Blend
- Café Altura
- The Organic Coffee Company

<http://www.gmo-compass.org/eng/database/plants/42.coffee.html>

Yes, I am going to give you more science based evidence, to consider when You choose to maintain a relationship with this dark, taste-bud tantalizing, seductress, coffee. If losing your teeth and introducing neurotoxins into your body weren't discouraging enough, here's more "drink" for thought.

Did you know caffeine is an addictive stimulant that directly affects your brain chemistry?

YES. . . Coffee, which contains caffeine is a stimulant. It is believed that some 3 out of 4 regular caffeine users are "addicted" to the substance. Consuming as little as 200 mg of caffeine a day (an average of 10-12 ounces of coffee) can lead to [addiction](#) and altered chemistry in the brain.

Caffeine's main effect on the body is an increased temporary sense of wakefulness and alertness, but it can also cause, the shakes, difficulty sleeping or interrupted sleep, increased heartbeat, [high blood pressure](#), headaches, nervousness, dependency and a variety of other symptoms.

Even the FDA (Food and Drug Administration or Federal Death Association) recommends not exceeding the amount of 400mg daily. However, they leave that to the responsibility of the consumer.

Death Wish Coffee – contains 651mg in 12 ounces and Starbucks Venti – contains 415 in 20 ounces.

No big deal, you're a responsible coffee drinker and never resort to anything crazy! Right?

Let's look at the basics of how your body physically reacts once caffeine is in the blood stream.

Upon consumption, caffeine reaches peak levels in the blood stream as quickly as 15 minutes, but within one hour and remains there for, four to six hours. At which time we often have a need for that second cup of whatever it is your drinking (or a nap) due to a feeling of lethargy.

Believe it or not, most adults need seven to eight hours of sleep each night in order to have optimal brain function the following day. Caffeine can interfere with the sleep cycle; it decreases the quantity of sleep and the temporal lobe's organization of slowed and [REM](#) sleep. Sleep loss is cumulative, and even small nightly decreases can add up and disturb daytime alertness and performance. If only-ALL employers knew this, they would eliminate the coffee pot at work!

My grandmother would wake at 4am to have a cup of coffee in order to go back to sleep. Weird, huh? I bet not something you are unfamiliar with? Maybe you are nodding your head in agreement, that coffee actually puts you to sleep also?

Caffeine (no matter the source, energy drinks, coffee, black tea, etc.) is known to stimulate the central nervous system increasing heart rate, respiration, psychotropic (mood-altering) properties and acts as a mild diuretic. To a nerve cell, caffeine looks like adenosine, and begins docking in the adenosine receptor sites of the cell. Alone, adenosine is a neuromodulator, believed to play a role in promoting sleep and suppressing arousal. It plays a major role in the regulation of blood flow to various organs through [vasodilation](#). However, when combined with phosphates, adenosine becomes a necessary component of the material that energizes each cell of your body, [ATP](#), ADP and cAMP.

Caffeine strongly affects the activity of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. The HPA axis influences the body's ability to manage and deal with stress, both at rest and during activity.

With caffeine now blocking the uptake of adenosine from the cell (picture it like a skeleton key broke off in a lock) the blood vessels of the brain constrict and there is

an increase in the firing of neurons in the brain. The light bulb goes on, and another one turns on and another one and another one, creating a sense of hyperactivity.

The pituitary gland observes the increased activity (light bulbs turning on) and perceives it as an emergency, so it releases hormones that tell the adrenal glands to produce cortisol and adrenaline (epinephrine).

When the adenosine receptors are blocked because these caffeine molecules took their place of uptake, dopamine (the feel good chemical) works more efficiently. The excess adenosine then signals the adrenal glands to release adrenaline, which further perpetuates the so called feeling of alertness.

Adrenaline is the “fight or flight” hormone that had numerous benefits in the time of creation, ie, running from a lion, tiger or bear OR fighting off another caveman to keep your cavelady all to yourself. Yet, today, we don’t really need to encourage the added release of this or cortisol, better known as the stress-hormone. We create enough stress from the simple day-to-day activities of parenting and/or working. With each cup of coffee, stimulation of adrenaline follows, a variety of possible effects on your body may occur: your pupils may dilate, heart may race, blood pressure may rise, muscles may constrict but blood flow to stomach decreases impairing digestion while acidity in your stomach rises leading to heartburn, acid indigestion, ulcers and gut dysbiosis and glucose is released from the liver for extra energy causing insulin resistance because the body cannot effectively deliver glucose into the cells because they are less receptive.

It’s kind of like the boy who cried . . .WOLF! The body treats itself just like the village treated the boy. It say’s where is the emergency? Oh there is no emergency? Well then . . . how do we know when you are telling the truth? We can’t keep up with all the “fake” emergencies you are creating.

Studies in humans have shown that regular consumption of caffeine increases cortisol and adrenaline even when the person consuming is at rest, and that levels of cortisol after caffeine consumption are similar to those experienced during an acute stress. Drinking coffee, in other words, re-creates unhealthy stress conditions for the body.

Rat studies have shown that caffeine consumption during a state of chronic stress increased their cortisol levels, blood pressure, and had various other negative hormonal events. Chronically stressed rats who consumed caffeine ended up sicker (due to be immuno-compromised from the chronic release of stress hormones, shutting down the immune system), and died sooner, than rats experiencing chronic stress without caffeine consumption.

Coffee (Caffeine) + Calm = Stress in the Body

Coffee (Caffeine) + Stress = Complete Disharmony in the Body as a Whole

In addition to that, caffeine inhibits the absorption and assimilation of iron, which is a key mineral involved with the synthesis of serotonin and dopamine. Additionally, we need the activated form of vitamin B6, pyridoxal-5-phosphate, to synthesize serotonin, dopamine and GABA. Coffee consumption can decrease amounts of circulating B-vitamins, which could affect neurotransmitter synthesis in a variety of ways.

Now, when a person misses or decides to quit their usual morning caffeine fix, the brain is then flooded with adenosine, and in turn dopamine levels drop drastically causing the brain's chemistry to be out of balance. If you are now beginning to understand just how easily your cup o' joe can affect your entire body, please wean yourself slowly, over the course of several weeks, or better yet, even months. Cutting cold turkey can put you into a state of with-drawl, confusion and resentment, realistically, sending you back to your addictive liquid seductress to engage in your love affair once again.

Try to decrease the amount of coffee you drink by half for 21 days. Then repeat and repeat again until it is out of your life. Or consider cutting it 50/50 with Dandy Blend or Tecchino, two herbal coffee substitutes.

I am well aware of how it feels to NEED to have something in order to survive the day. I understand the difficulty in eliminating an addiction. Organic, fair-trade, shade grown, bird friendly coffee or caffeine in moderation (2-3 cups a week) might not be an issue for the average person. Indeed, it may actually have health benefits. Yet again, the majority of coffee drinkers are addicted and drink it habitually daily,

multiple times a day combined with sedentary lifestyles, poor diets, and chronically elevated levels of stress.

If you drink more than 5 cups a week and you think coffee doesn't play a role in ravaging your health, I encourage you to think again. Science says otherwise.

If you are a pregnant or nursing mama who consumes coffee more than 5x a week, note that you are feeding your fetus/baby an addictive drug that they will have trouble weaning from postpartum. It will affect their sleep habits and mood. It will affect their adrenal glands and brain chemistry.

Your body can only benefit from kicking the habit. I would be happy to support you in this process of elimination and assist you in building a Natural Health program to strengthen your overall health.

This blog is dedicated to my Sita, the most loving, kind, unselfish, heart-warming, humble person I ever knew. She was perhaps the most influential Lady in my life. Her famous last words before leaving this world, "Love Heals ALL Things."