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Perspective

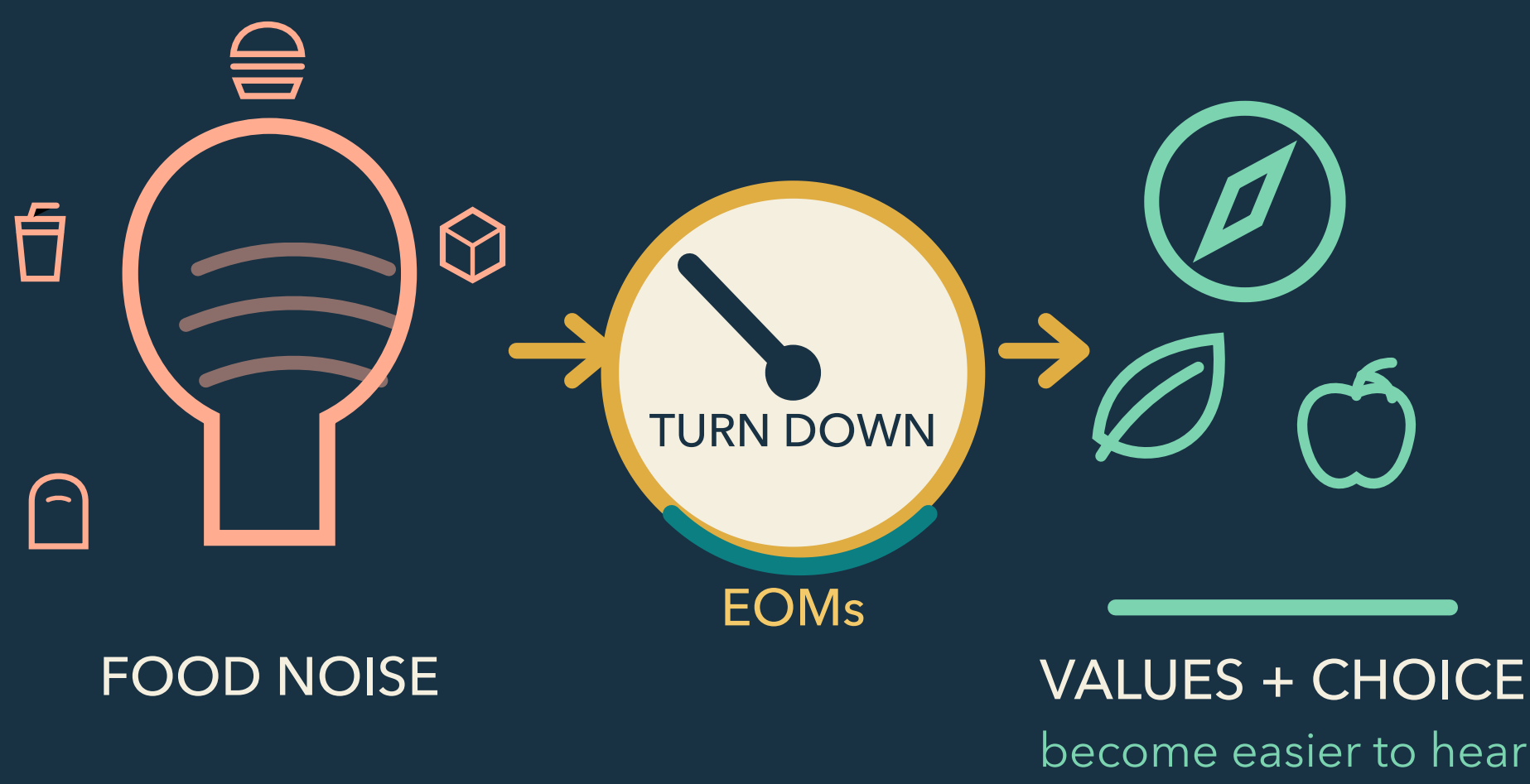
The Pharmacological Window Hypothesis: How Emerging Obesity Medications May Realize Decades of Plant-Forward Dietary Recommendations ☆

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Could emerging obesity medications (GLP-1) make decades of plant-forward guidance **newly tractable?**

Quieting the noise changes what can be heard.

A brief window in which the diet
we already value may become the
easier choice.



SWIPE →

There is considerably more **agreement** than disagreement about a healthful diet.

Emphasize

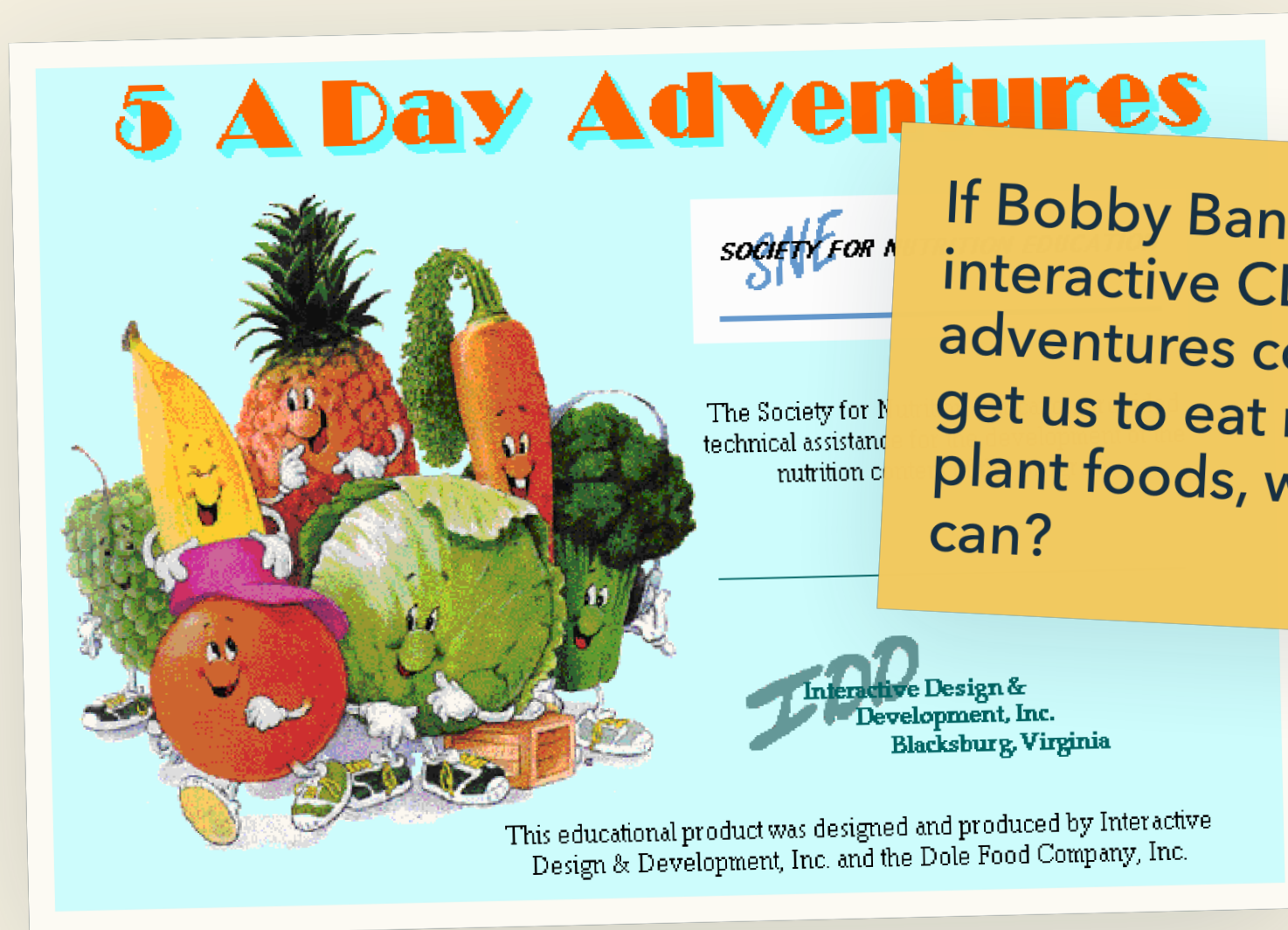
-  Fruits & vegetables
-  Legumes
-  Nuts & seeds
-  Whole grains

Limit

-  Added sugar
-  Sodium
-  Saturated fat

These enduring elements of guidance remained **remarkably consistent** from 1980 through 2025.

And while the call to consume more plant foods has only grown more explicit over time...

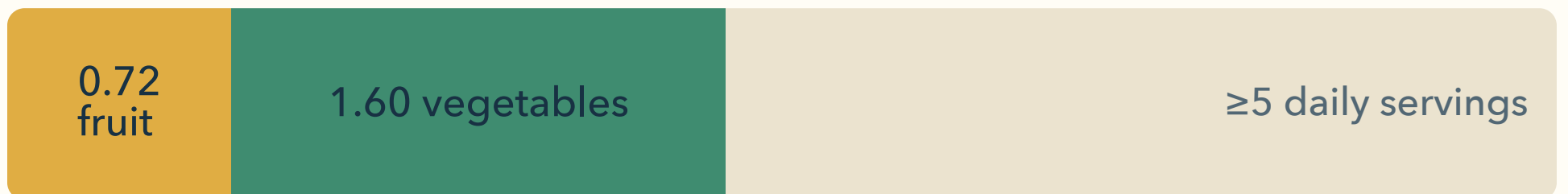


Population intake **did not follow.**

American diets remain quite **discordant** from recommendations.

Whole fruit + vegetables

2.32 / ≥ 5



Fiber intake

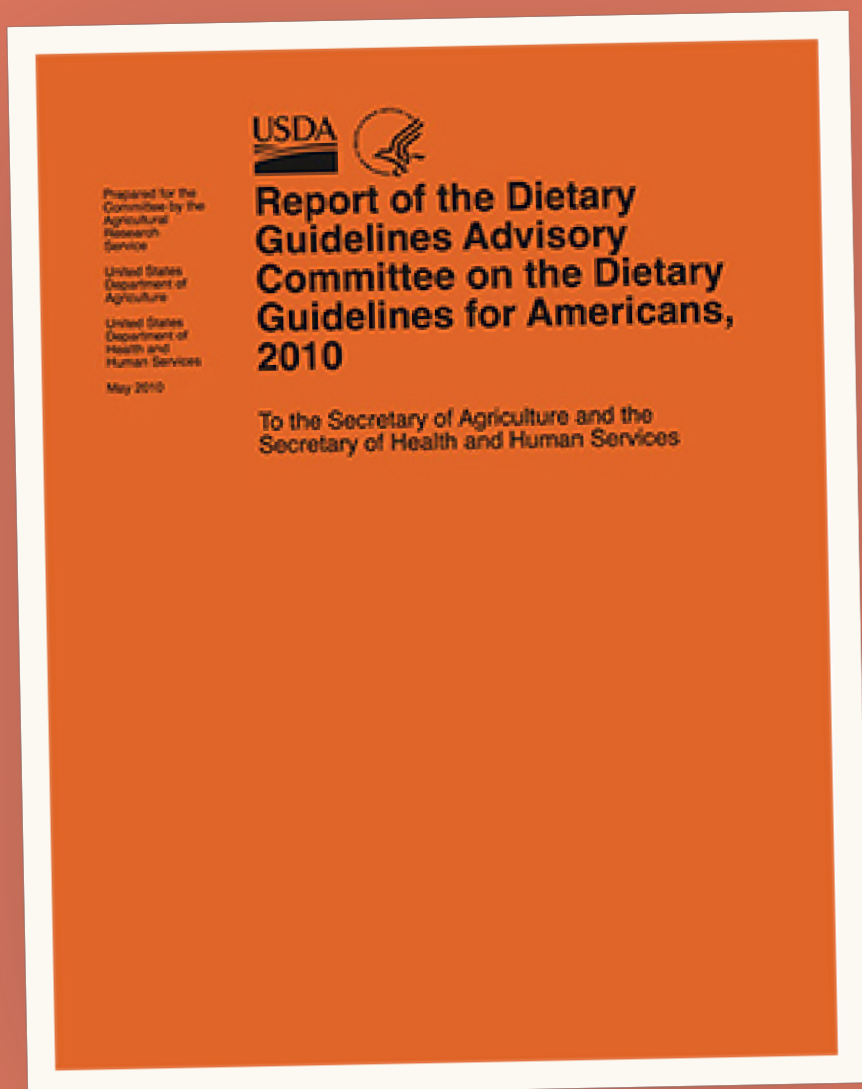
$\approx 50\%$



about half of recommendations

It is not that guidance has failed; it is that guidance **alone** was never fit to overcome the **barriers** inherent to a modern food environment.

Knowledge was never the whole problem.

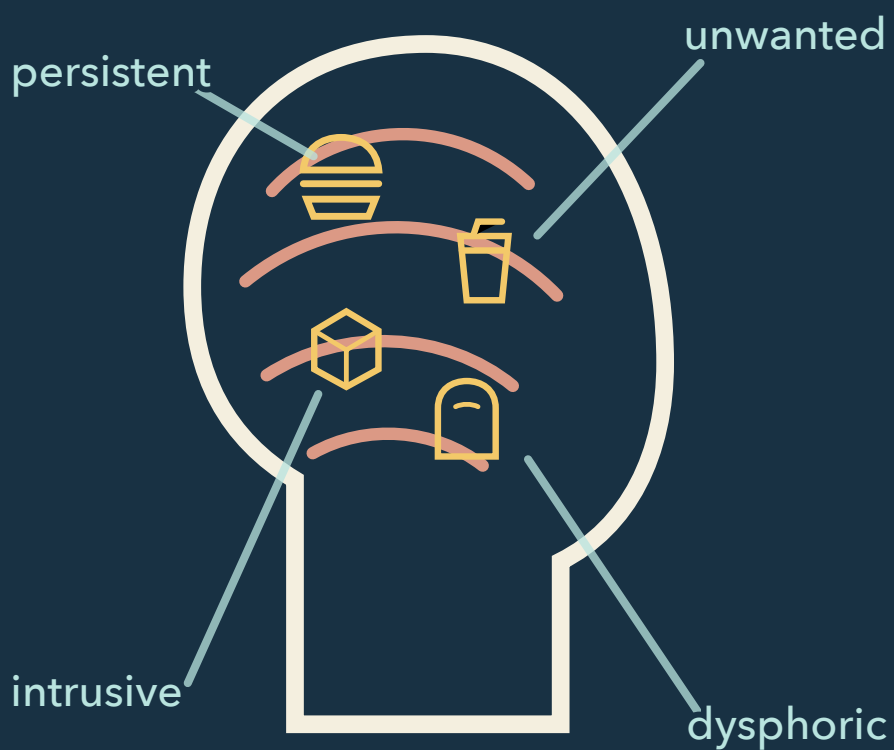


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Mere repetition of advice will not effectively help Americans achieve these evidence-based and often-repeated goals.

The real obstacle is not the message but the **barriers** a modern food environment places between intention and action.

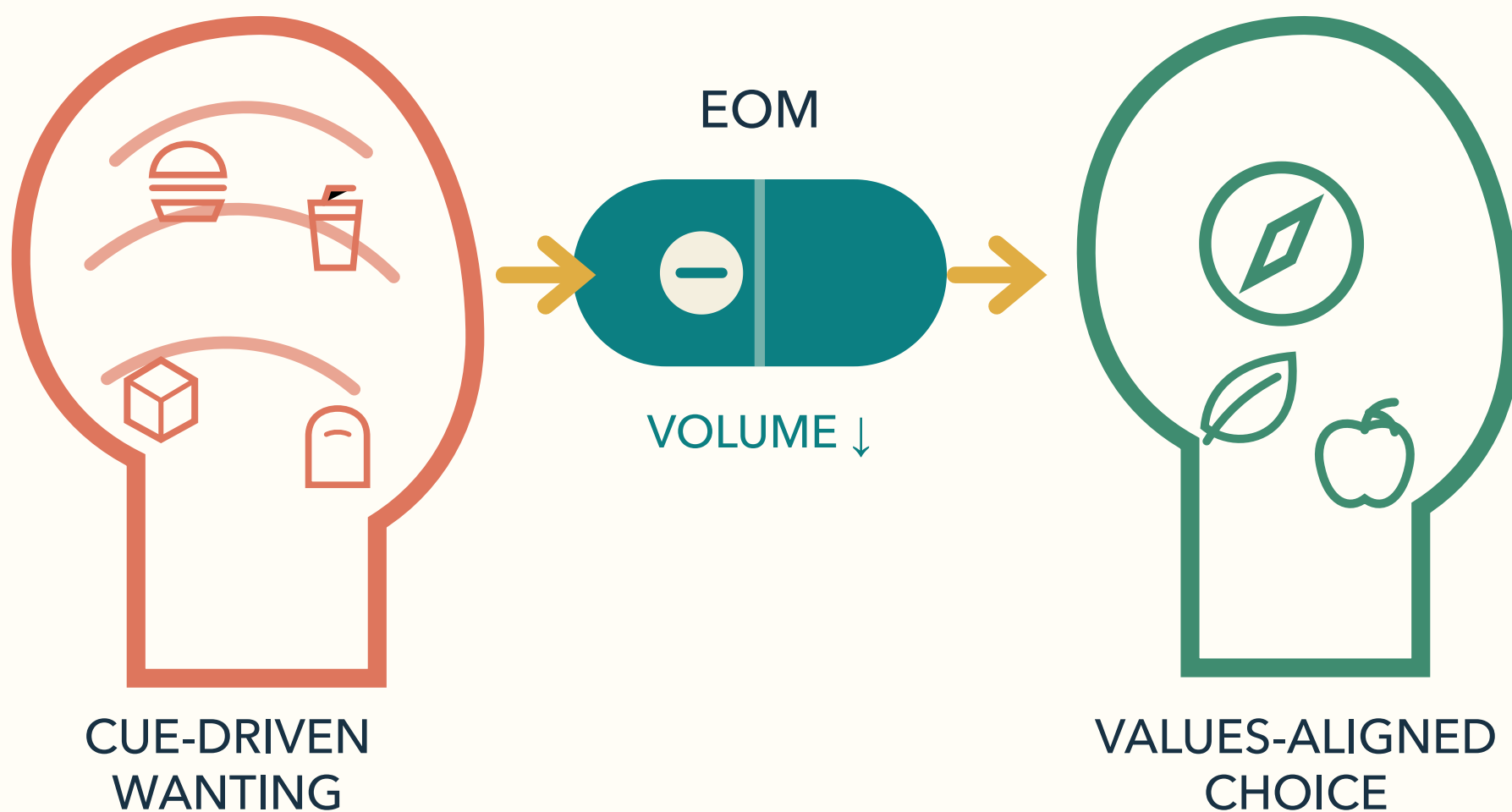
Food noise. More than ordinary thoughts about food.



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Persistent thoughts about food that are perceived by the individual as being **unwanted and/or dysphoric** and may cause harm to the individual, including social, mental, or physical problems."

A new generation of therapies often seems to abruptly quiet food noise.



With less immediate hedonic pressure, EOMs (GLP-1 medications) may create a window in which more people can focus on healthful eating.

Four mechanisms could change the balance of food choice.

Together, they may predispose choice *toward* a plant-forward dietary pattern.

1

Selective dampening

Cravings fall most for energy-dense foods; fruits and vegetables may be spared.

2

Sustained late-meal shifts

Sustained satiation may extend late-meal preference shifts.

3

Preference-intake dissociation

Intake can fall while desirability stays high—and rise for fruits and greens.

4

Bandwidth for values

Less hedonic friction may let health, identity, and sustainability guide choice.

Less wanting—not a blanket suppression of food motivation.

Cravings decreased across every measured category **except some plant-forward options, such as fruits and vegetables.**



High-fat foods ↓



Sweets ↓



Carbs & starches ↓



Fast-food fats ↓



Fruit & vegetables ↔



Separately, fMRI showed **reduced** reward and salience responses to high-fat/high-sugar food cues.

We can want what we do not like—and like what we do not want.

EOMs appear to modulate *wanting* more strongly than *liking*.



Want + like

Before a meal, the pursuit and enjoyment of a reward often align.



Like ≠ want

In a fed state, enjoyment can remain while motivation to pursue the food falls.

In a sustained fed state, the heavy, energy-dense foods that lean hardest on strong *wanting* are the first to lose their pull—while lighter **plant-forward options**, less dependent on that drive, stay easy to choose.

Automatic motivation
may **weaken its grip**.
Reflective motivation
may gain more influence
in guiding food choice.

Automatic motivation

Cravings, cue-reactivity,
habit, immediate
hedonic drive



Reflective motivation

Health goals, values,
identity, sustainability



Values do not change; rather, their
expression becomes less
obstructed.

What people consume can change even when what they find desirable **does not**.

Largest reductions

Processed foods, sugar-sweetened beverages, refined grains, and beef.

Net increases

Fruits and leafy greens—the only categories that increased in one consumer survey.



Yet desirability for the foods reduced remained **high and unchanged**.

Preference and intake come apart—biased, quietly, **toward plant foods**.

EOMs do not teach us what to eat. They may quiet the noise long enough for **what we already value** to guide behavior.

Next – The Window: the opening is temporary. What should we build inside it?



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