

Essay on cake for happiness

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Learning to Find Happiness by Eating Cake

Cake for Happiness: Learning to Find Happiness by Eating Cake

Cake has always been associated with celebrations. A birthday party or a wedding does not seem to be complete without cake or some form of it as the centerpiece of the table. Even celebrations like promotions, winning a contest or game, and graduation merits a cake. Nowadays, the bigger the celebration and the cause for it, the bigger and more elaborate the cake. Cake has come to signify that a certain gathering is a gathering meant for happiness. Gatherings that are not for joyful purposes seem to not be a gathering that needs the presence of a cake, for example funerals. Over the years, as cake became more accessible to more people, cake became a sort of comfort food, that is, people ate cake not only to celebrate an event or achievement but also if they had a bad day and wanted to feel happy.

This paper will look at the development of cake's association with happiness through three learning perspectives, namely, classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and cognitive social perspective.

Classical conditioning is a learning process wherein a thought or behavior is learned through stimuli and responses. It describes learning as a result of one's responses to different stimuli and using these responses to form a behavior by deliberately associating another aspect to said stimuli to develop the same response (" Classical Conditioning", 2012).

In the case of the cake, humans are first introduced to it the first time a cake is used in a lifetime: the first birthday party celebration. Oftentimes, a yearly

birthday celebration includes a cake – with the presence of the cake signifying a birthday celebration more than birthday presents. Many years of celebrating birthdays with a cake keeps the mind associating cakes with birthdays and other happy celebrations such as Christmas, graduation, promotion, and Valentine’s day, therefore, triggering in the mind feeling of happiness associated with these events. It can be said that the unconditioned stimulus is the celebration and the unconditioned response is the feeling of happiness. The conditioned stimulus is the cake, which triggers an unconditioned response of happiness.

Operant conditioning is a learning process wherein the use of rewards and punishments are utilized. It describes learning as a process wherein behavior is developed and associated with consequences, whether good or bad, of one’s actions (Shah, 2009).

Cake is used in celebrations more than birthdays. It is used during weddings, celebrations of achievements like graduation and promotion, and even as celebration for an end of a project or winning a contest or game. In this way, cake has become a reward. Cake is part of the reward of finding and marrying the person you love. Cake is a reward for earning a degree or working hard to earn a promotion. Cake is a reward for winning a contest and earning glory for your family or group or country. These achievements are the actual rewards of hard work but the cake symbolizes a tangible, albeit edible, reward and is clearly associated with these achievements. It does not even have to be a big achievement; we may hear people say, “ if I ace that exam next week, I will treat myself to a slice of cake,” or “ if we

finish the project on time, I'll buy a cake for everyone." This is because cake has become an incentive, a reward for good and productive behavior.

The happiness that people feel for their achievements now become closely associated with cake, therefore seeing cake, the reward, as another source of happiness. This seems to be the case why some people who had a bad day "reward" themselves with cake. While having a bad day does not merit a reward, eating cake makes one associate with the feeling of happiness one gets when achieving something simply by getting the "reward."

The cognitive-social learning perspective is a learning process that assumes each person has different cognitive abilities to adapt to their current social environment. It takes into account each person's individual and specific competencies, beliefs, values systems, and emotions. It also takes into account the different social situations that an individual may find himself in and how he would react to that based on his cognitive abilities (Mischel, 1973).

Associating cake with happiness can also be learned through this perspective. People with cognitive abilities would associate celebrations with happiness; after all, at the core of all reasons for celebration, it is happiness that we celebrate. And whenever there is a celebration, people adapt to the celebratory mood mainly because the social atmosphere is infectious. People use their cognitive ability to process that, yes, it is a happy event, and yes, there is cake and that cake is there for a reason. People then begin to associate cake with celebrations and therefore to happiness.

References

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