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A Functional Analysis of "Stomach Problems"

At my first job, working at Dairy Queen, it was not so much earning money but sampling ice cream that kept me working. I would end each shift with ice cream. But, after several months of snacking I began to regularly but unexplainably become sick. I did not think much about this because I have had gastrointestinal problems nearly all my life. In fact, being sick allowed me to skip school. With school being aversive, my complaints about digestive problems were negatively reinforced. Nonetheless, as my digestive problems worsened I ate less of everything including ice cream and my digestive problems lessened and I would often return to snacking on ice cream.

Eventually, the relation between my sickness and eating ice cream became clear. My parents had told relatives of my problems, and many had similar experiences due to lactose intolerance. So, my parents conducted a crude functional analysis. I behaved as usual but did not eat ice cream. This produced a long stretch of good health until I next sampled some Dairy Queen treats and immediately became ill. Over time, the familiar symptoms appeared when I consumed other dairy products as my lactose intolerance worsened. Now I closely monitor what I eat and will not be working at another ice cream shop anytime soon.