



Article by **Mary Ann Wallace, MD, MA**

## Eating With Care

I am often asked for advice about "how to" change eating habits. Below is a short list of suggestions:

### 1. Slow it down

- Notice what you are eating, and that you are eating.
- Pay attention to how your body feels as it is satisfied with just the right amount of food.
- "Fast foods" is an oxymoron.
- Stop eating when you are satisfied. Boxing up leftovers is OK, even at home. Be sure to notice if you're actually thirsty – try water first.
- Brush your teeth right after you eat.

### 2. Make it special

- Sit down. Prepare the meal for a guest (you qualify as a guest)
- Use smaller plates and serve yourself only the food you need - with care
- End a meal with a ritual that feels good to you – possibly a dab of dessert, for example, or tea, an after meal mint, etc.

### 3. Notice what is driving the eating

- Ask yourself whether you are really hungry, or whether you might be feeling anxiety or some other charged emotion that makes you uncomfortable.
- Keep a list handy of other things you can do to meet the actual need. Make it easy.
- Know your difficult times and act preventively.
- Enlist the help of a friend.

### 4. Focus on gratitude

- Thankfulness is just what it says: being full of thanks. It is the fast track to not feeding an emptiness that doesn't really need food.
- Expressing gratitude before a meal helps the mind engage in the right framework for eating in the most nourishing way possible.

## 5. Above all else, be mindful.

If you are stuck in a pattern of eating you don't like, chances are that either (a) it's just a mindless habit, or (b) there is a recurring inner anxiety (be it from loneliness, stress or whatever that is "gnawing" at you) and you are feeding it with food instead of dealing with the underlying root. In either case, increasing the capacity to notice or be mindful will help to open up the space within which you can effect deep and authentic change.

Please note: There is a list of suggestions in Appendix D of my book, *Mindful Eating, Mindful Life*.

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