



Article by Dr. Mary Ann Wallace, MD, MA

Eating with Care

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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 - whether it be a dab of dessert, tea, an after meal mint
3. Notice what is driving the eating
 - Ask yourself if you are really hungry - or feeling anxious or some other charged emotion that you are uncomfortable with
 - Have 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:

 - it's just a mindless habit, or
 - 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 to deeply and authentically make change.

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