



Mindless Eating

The holiday season is an easy time to be mindless about what we are eating. A great book that increases our awareness is *Mindless Eating* by Brian Wansink. He writes in a humorous style that gives us lots to think about.

Wansink claims that Americans are externally cued – what we eat is influenced by what is around us. We are affected by the amount of food, lighting, the size of the plate and serving utensils, even by how much people around us are eating.

His theory on the French paradox (why French women can eat fattening foods and not gain weight) is that they are internally cued. They stop eating when they feel full and pay less attention to the external cues.

The book is full of ideas for ways to change your environment so that you can mindlessly eat less. These are useful strategies, and I regularly recommend them. However, the real shift comes in changing from eating based on what is ‘out there’ to what is inside of you. When you tune in and eat mindfully, you don’t have to eat food just because it is there.



Finding Peace in the Holiday Rush

This time of year it is easy to get lost in the rush of activity. When we start running out of time, we compensate by letting go of the things we do to care for ourselves. We give up our exercise. We stay up late. We expect ourselves to go-go-go. Then, as we crash, we wonder why we aren’t enjoying the holidays more.

Long winter days are a time of quiet, of going within. Do you long for silence? For deep peace? When you feel that, you are in tune with the natural seasonal rhythm. How can we reconcile winter’s rhythm with the intense rush of holiday activity? Can we be part of both and enjoy both? Of course!

Think about the abundant choices. Which nourish you? Which do you do because you ‘must’? How many things do you do thinking there is no choice, when really there is? Maybe there is an alternate approach that is a better fit now. Maybe this could be the year to evaluate and simplify; to make the holidays more meaningful and joyful.

One way to increase meaning and joy is to find time for you. Getting enough exercise and sleep allows you to fully enjoy the activities that you choose to do. Making good food choices, most of the time, keeps your energy steady and helps you feel your best. Slowing down, even just a little, gives you time to *see* the choices so you *can* choose wisely.

When you continue to do the things that take care of *you*, you are filled and have more to give. You are more likely to feel the joy that is inherent in the season. When you are filled with joy it spills over to others. When you find peace every-one benefits.

Holiday Strategies: Navigating the Excess

The challenge of making good food choices escalates in December. Food is everywhere! Coworkers bring their holiday baking to work. Friends arrive with goodies. There are parties and events – all with tempting choices. How can we make good choices in this sea of abundance?

When we stay balanced we are more likely to make good choices. Stress, being tired, and emotional upset are all triggers to eat. When we slow down, just a little, we are more tuned in. Try pausing before reaching for treats. Tune in to your breath and center yourself.

Enjoy the foods of the season; just be moderate about it. If you expect yourself to make the “right” choice every time, you’ll be disappointed. All-or-none thinking leads to excess: “Now that I’ve blown it, it doesn’t matter what I eat”. Plan to indulge in moderation. It helps if you focus on the people instead of the food.

Set some boundaries. Decide what works for you. I always had my own rule about not eating sweets at work. Instead of having to decide each time I saw them, I didn’t even have to think about it. You may want to ask your mother not to give you a tin of fudge this year, or decline the cookie exchange. Narrow the options to those that are most important to you.

When you do indulge, really enjoy it. Savor the flavor. Stop and give it your full attention. Notice how you feel as you eat it, and how it feels later. Don’t be critical – just notice. Stay conscious and satisfying choices will come more easily.

Wishing you and your family all the magic the holidays can offer!

Holiday Gift Ideas

My journal, “Coming Home to Body and Self” is a great stocking stuffer. I also have an ebook: “Healthy Fats: Understanding the Omega-3 and Omega-6 Connection”.

Both can be ordered online:

www.healthyhabitscoach.com/products.htm

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

I work with people who are ready to stop dieting and are looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy.

Discover Wellness from the Inside Out!

