



### Delaying Gratification: The Artful Pause

Are there times when you reach for food but are not really hungry? It could be second helpings, a second glass of wine, or an automatic response when you walk into your kitchen. These are times when, if you respond in the usual way, you automatically eat more. But you don't have to; instead you can create an artful pause to move the focus away from food.

Create an imaginary pause button. It could be structured as a commitment to wait 10 minutes. It could be a substitute, like a cup of tea, some deep breaths, a walk, or anything that refocuses your attention. Or use the pause to stay with a feeling instead of avoiding it; try saying hello to it and just see what is there.



When you hit this "pause button", everything stops for a moment. Instead of being mindlessly swept along in the activity, it gives you a chance to step back and choose what you really want to do. Sometimes it will be the food. But more often, once you pause and check in, the desire for it lessens. You can choose something else and avoid those extra calories!

### There is a Good Reason Why We Crave Sweets

Human beings are hardwired to love the taste of fat, salt and sugar: we actually respond to them by releasing chemicals that are similar to opium. Sweets really do make us feel good – at least temporarily. Craving sweets can make us think something is wrong with us, but it is just a natural response.

In our original hunter-gatherer lifestyle, craving sweets helped us survive: bitter foods in that environment could be poisonous. However, nature never predicted that thousands of years later we'd live with so many choices of foods high in sugar. Grocery stores trump nature in making high sugar foods easily available.

While it is true that our natural response to sweets can lead us towards overeating, it doesn't mean there is nothing we can do about it. We need to make conscious choices to stay healthy. If we lose ourselves in our desires it just gets worse: the more sweets we eat, the more we crave. When we eat less desserts and prepared foods, we find more enjoyment in the natural sweetness of fruits and whole foods.



We can also find pleasurable alternatives. Exercise and sex offer a similar opium-like chemical response. Experiment to see what alternatives work for you. Try enjoying a break, connecting with a friend or taking a walk. As you develop other pleasurable brain pathways, sweets are just one of many choices.

### Whole Grain Navigation

Many of us eat less whole grains than we think. Food packaging doesn't help. While the majority of bread labels claim they are multigrain, most are *really* mostly white flour. I see new boxes of "whole grain" crackers on the grocery store shelf, but when I look at the label the first ingredient is wheat flour (which is white flour). Marketing can be deceptive!

You have to know what to look for to not be swayed by misleading packaging. When you check out a label, look for a whole grain as a first ingredient (which means it is the predominant ingredient). Whole wheat, whole oats, cracked wheat, and sprouted wheat are all examples of whole grains.

Next on the label, look at fiber content. Compare the fiber content of various choices. Breads and crackers should be at least 3 grams of fiber per slice or serving. Cereals should be at least 4-5 grams of fiber. Some products are made with white flours, but boost their fiber content by adding bran. Added fiber is okay, but I think it is most important to get the whole grain the way nature made it. The milling process strips away many nutrients and only some get added back.

When you eat a variety of grains, you get a variety of healthy nutrients and increase your fiber intake. Here are some rough fiber contents for various grains:

White rice= 0 grams fiber

Brown, red, black rice= 2 gm per 1/4 cup (uncooked)

Barley or Wheat berries= 6 gm per 1/4 cup (uncooked)

Lentils, Beans, Split Peas= 10+ grams per 1/4 cup (uncooked)

The other big reason that people eat less whole grain than they think, is a tendency to limit carbohydrates at mealtime (which can be a good source of whole grains), but then fill in with refined carbohydrate snacks (think chips, cookies, sweets, French bread, etc). I'll write more about this next month. Check the nutrition section of my website for more detail about what to look for in carbohydrates.

### Teleclass Schedule

**FOOD FITNESS - 9/29 11:30 am Free Intro**

At the Fit Body Balance Studio in Santa Rosa 707 576-8376  
*Tools and strategies to navigate the holiday food season!*

**When It's Not About the Food: How to Stop Eating**

4 Wednesdays, starting October 3; 12 noon -1 pm \$80

*Explore emotional hunger and what you can do about it.*

### Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

I work with people 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!*

