

NOURISHMENT Emotional eating or soulful satisfaction?

Attend to your soul menu, and your weight and eating patterns will sort themselves out.

Nourishment banquet, not a diet regime

Don't you love (or probably hate) the word diet – “die” plus a small cross on the end?

Diets, with the connotation of limitation and deprivation, often kill you – not necessarily literally, but they can certainly see you going into battle. When you restrict yourself, what happens? At some stage you rebel. You kick, scream and resist. Your body cries out, “feed me” and your mind, or willpower tries to ignore it or overpower your body's cries. In this case, body and mind are not on the same page, and such conflict can set up the “never win” cycle of yo-yo dieting and fluctuating weight.

Diet can also be viewed in terms of wholesomeness, well-roundedness and balance – all of which can energise and sustain you – at a mind, body and soul level, not just at a stomach level. The vital ingredients I believe are soul nutrients. When you nourish your soul with friendships, relationships, activities and practices that “light you up” (or “enlighten” you), you not only feel “lighter” and satiated at an emotional and soulful level, but this can be reflected at the physical level – you no longer have to fill yourself up with unnecessary stomach fillers.

Have you ever considered having a “nourishment banquet menu” (how nurturing do these words even sound?) rather than a diet regime (sounds like warfare!) or a diet based on negative emotional states and low self worth? Can you taste the difference? What would be on your nourishment menu and how could having a nourishment menu reflect and reinforce your positive self worth?

“You are what you eat” philosophy

Many of you make huge judgements about food– what is and isn't OK to eat or you continue tossing what you label as “bad food,” into your body. In that case, you are making an unconscious (or perhaps conscious) judgement on yourself – you eat what you think you are worth.

With poor food choices you may also be armouring yourself, burying emotional stuff in the “excess food rubble” or even punishing yourself. You think of yourself so poorly that you continue to abuse your body and lead yourself along “death row” - death to the many opportunities that otherwise you could utilise if you freed yourself of the grievances, trauma and emotional nooses you continue to keep around your neck.

How would thinking of yourself in less judgemental and more compassionate eyes support you in your food choices and the way you nourish yourself, rather than abuse yourself? How could that lead you down “life row” rather than death row?

Emotional eating or soulful satisfaction

Eating is an emotional experience – in a positive and negative light. Abuse, addictions and staying stuck in weight and poor eating and exercise patterns are all feeding you in certain ways - filling the void in most cases or squashing emotions down. What are you feeling when you need your next fix of...? What emotional highs and lows are you feeling? How are you feeding those highs and lows?

What emotions are keeping you stuck? How could you safely express these emotions to “lighten your load?” How else can you fill this void in other healthier ways?

What do you feel is missing in the first place? In all likelihood, you haven’t got constructive emotional outlets or your soul is not satisfied. Get high on nourishing your soul by creating an addictive pattern or craving for making soul nourishment a top priority and by finding ways to enjoy eating as a positive emotional experience.

What residual grief, emotional stuckness or unhealed wounds would you like to eliminate from your life (and body)? What soul nutrients have you not included in your diet for a while that you would like to introduce into your menu again?

“Just desserts” and balancing your life menu

Have you ever been to a restaurant specialising in desserts? They are lots of fun to be at occasionally, but with life, just like on a typical menu, it is good to aim for some kind of balance – drinks and food, meat and vegetables, appetisers and aperitifs, garlic bread and after dinner mints. Funnily enough this reminds me of my son once saying, “Hey this carrot cake is healthy – it has vegetables and sweets in it!”

Apply the balance principle to your eating and to your life. When you find yourself gorging yourself with plates of ice-cream or chocolate for example, ask yourself, “How does my life balance look right now? What needs a bit of sweetening? What in my life at present leaves a sour taste? What am I going through emotionally that is weighing me down, or what am I stuffing down? What am I denying myself of at the moment, that I presently crave?”

The balancer could be dietary, exercise to complement your eating or “off-loading” with a friend. It could be having someone cook for you and allowing you to “abandon” a responsibility regularly, taking a lunch break amidst a busy work day, following your own passion first and foremost, and secondly supporting others in theirs. It could be balancing out more physical activities with more soulful and spiritual activities, resting more so you can work more efficiently and having still time as well as the wild times. Are you (literally and figuratively) having more dessert than entrée? More drinks than food? No appetisers but loads of after dinner mints? How could you better balance your life menu?

Seasonal menu

Buying, growing and eating what is in season makes sense from an availability and economic perspective. But there is an analogy here to life as well. There is a season for everything. When you are going through a “winter” patch – not just in the sense of being cold and inside a lot more, but in the sense of hard times, you need to nourish your body, mind and soul with heart warming activities, friends and “warm fuzzies”. Lighten up in summer – in a dietary sense, but also in the sense of creating opportunities for outside activities that you enjoy and wearing clothing that doesn’t weigh you down. In the autumn when the trees are losing their leaves, why not look in your pantry and take out the expired items and also sift out some other activities, interests, habits, patterns or even people out of your own life which have passed their expiry date. In the joys of Spring create some new dishes – full of colour, texture and new taste sensations – but also decide what in your life you now wish to create, give birth to or make more colourful.

Toxic food for thought - Beware of food poisoning

No-one likes food poisoning as it makes you feel like “crap”. Nor would you expect “crap” food to be served at a restaurant. Notice not only what “crap” food you are eating, but also start “the other crap you are throwing into your body” elimination diet. That’s a great diet to be on! You could start by eliminating cigarettes, alcohol, drugs...and how about toxic thoughts, words, relationships and behaviours that poison you and others? Such toxicity does nothing for your physical well-being, nor does it align with what your soul desires for you. Eliminate toxic soul food and indulge in new tonic soul nutrients.

Two different menus at the one restaurant

Note that when women are pregnant they often give up on some substances they think might be harmful to their baby. Whether you are pregnant or not, what makes this next generation more important than you? It’s a bit like you suddenly choosing the restaurant with the best and healthiest menu when you are tending to someone else, but feeding yourself in your “non-pregnant” state at the fast-food outlet.

Similarly, how often have you noticed parents demanding that their kids eat their greens while they are secretly feeding their face with chocolate when no-one is looking or overindulging in alcohol on the quiet (or not so quiet)? Case in point, it’s like having two menus at the same restaurant. Why not have one menu – with congruency with what you are expecting of, or giving to others – opting for the better restaurant and the better “food” - literally and figuratively.

Restaurant etiquette

A meal at a restaurant is not just about the food. Nor are the activities we take part in only about the activity. It is about the full experience. Why then do we not incorporate aspects of the “restaurant experience” into our daily lives?

Practice restaurant etiquette mindfully whenever and wherever you eat. Enjoy more ritual around eating – taking time and space to not only digest your meal, but to enjoy the social occasion, opportunity for conversation, time away from other responsibilities and moments to be with people you care about – nourishing not only your body with some quick “chow down”, but to also savour the sanctity of the dining experience. You may wish to begin with gratitude grace – be thankful not only for good food but for your body’s amazing ability to use it to energise you. Thank the chef of the day – especially if it is you! Don’t just toss together a meal. Lovingly prepare it. Relish the sensory input whilst preparing food and eating it as it is so easy to shovel it down, get to the end and wonder what you just ate!

So apply restaurant etiquette to all aspects of your life. That will help satisfy your soul, not just feed your hunger.

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