

## **Eat Like a Baby!**

*“The key to resolving your struggle with weight and food does not lie in a magical, or even logical, combination of eating and exercise” - Dr. Michelle May*

Last time I talked about the perils of restrictive dieting and punishing exercise, as shown on the TV show, *The Biggest Loser*. Now, I want to introduce you to a kinder, gentler way of being in charge of your eating and weight management - the philosophy of Mindful or Intuitive Eating.

Think about a baby...

...She knows when she's hungry and she lets us know it by crying! Then, she eats with intention and attention. And, when she's no longer hungry, she quits eating.

What happens when you try to feed a baby who isn't hungry? She spits out the nipple or turns her head away from the spoon. Force it and you might end up covered in oatmeal! Babies trust their bodies to tell them when to eat and when to stop - they're intuitive eaters.

We were all born as intuitive or mindful eaters who used food to fuel our bodies, knowing to eat when we're hungry and stop eating when that hunger is satisfied.

So, what happened? How did we get away from this natural way of eating?

Well, there are countless reasons, but childhood messages like, “Clean your plate, or you don't get dessert,” is an infamous one. Messages like this begin a habit of overeating in order to get the “special” or “forbidden” foods - usually sweets.

There are others, such as eating to comfort yourself for some emotional pain you dealt with in your childhood or are coping with presently. And, there's the eating to reward yourself for all the hard work you do. And, there's the eating when you're mad...oh, and when you're sad...oh, and when you're stressed...oh, and of course, when you're happy, too!

Of course, all this eating for reasons other than hunger have led to a major obesity problem in our country. And, if I may be so bold to say that for many, being overweight is a symptom of a much greater issue - the issue of being unhappy with aspects of our lives and using food to deal with that unhappiness.

However, that issue will have to be addressed in another post - or maybe in a book...

THIS post is about how to get back to eating like a baby AND, as a happy consequence, lose weight in the process. Here are the basic steps:

1. Wait until you're hungry to eat. Remember, the baby ONLY eats when she's hungry.

She doesn't grab the bag of chips or package of Oreos and crunch away because she's had a fight with the hubby!

\*Hint - If you can't tell when you're hungry anymore, here's a suggestion. You can be pretty sure that your stomach is empty after a full night's sleep, so try having a bite of breakfast to get the hunger cycle jump-started. Most people will begin to feel hunger pangs three to four hours after they've last eaten. Other less obvious symptoms of hunger might be a headache, a jittery feeling, being bitchy or feeling nauseous. And, if you want to eat when you're NOT hungry, use this urge to figure out what's triggering you. What is your true need? Eating that brownie will not make your boss less of an ass.

2. Eat your meal with the intention of fueling your body and feeling BETTER after the meal than when you started. Choose foods you LOVE and decide how much you're going to eat BEFORE you begin eating.

And, eat with attention to the food you've prepared. One of the wonderful pleasures of life is to enjoy good food as we fuel our bodies. So, honor the food and the person who prepared it by really savoring each bite. You can't pay attention to your food when you've got your nose in the latest issue of InStyle Magazine or when you're glued to NCIS: Los Angeles (I know, LLCoolJ is hot, but DVR it and pay attention to your meal) . Think about that baby again - when she's eating, her focus is entirely on the food.

3. Stop eating when you're no longer hungry. Notice I didn't say to stop eating when you're FULL. One of the key points of intuitive eating is to remember that your stomach is the size of your fist. Yes, really! You can see by looking at your fist that a Big Mac, Large fries and large drink or the whole pie are NOT going to fit into that space. Oh, you can MAKE it fit, but if you're feeding your body food it doesn't need, it will have to store it as - you guessed it - BODY FAT! Why ruin a great meal by overeating and feeling WORSE than when you started? Like that baby, turn your head away from the spoon!

Now, this intuitive or mindful eating is SIMPLE, but it's not EASY, and it takes some practice, so give yourself the time and some compassion as you move back toward your natural way of eating. You'll learn to trust your body's signals and messages again and you'll no longer have to rely on external rules of dieting to tell you when to eat, what to eat and how much to eat!

Please leave your comments, questions and ideas below. And, remember, "It is never too late to be what you might have been." -George Eliot

Lisa :-)

\* \* \* \* \*

© 2011 Lisa Capehart

Please feel free to share this article with your friends and be sure to visit my website at [www.LisaCapehart.com](http://www.LisaCapehart.com).