

## CONSCIOUS EATING DURING THE HOLIDAYS— ONE BITE AT A TIME

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How many of us make New Year's resolutions regarding food or drink? Many of us have binged our way through the holiday season at one time or another. Let's take a look at the real reasons why this happens and let's find out why we probably weren't satisfied with just one portion of food or beverage.

Learning why we overindulge or eat inappropriate food is the first step to changing the negative habits controlling our lives. Hidden tension is a major cause of inappropriate eating. Yogi Amrit Desai taught that when we experience unpleasant emotions or feel tense, we are losing energy and unconsciously feel a need to replace the energy because food is the fastest and easiest way to get energy. We also seek relaxation through eating and drinking, gratifying our senses in the process. Unfortunately, when we eat inappropriately we usually end up losing more energy than we gain because the body is unable to digest what we have consumed.

The holiday season can be a difficult time of year for many of us. It can be a time of extreme stress and it's when we usually do more social eating and drinking. Even when we feel joy and happiness, all the excess activity entailed during this season can bring stress to the body from thirst and fatigue. Since lack of water itself can bring on fatigue, the root cause is often hard to uncover. (Carbonated beverages are not a substitute for water. Edgar Cayce advised that carbonated drinks short-circuit the system between the liver and the kidneys.)

Holiday tension can also be caused from anger, resentment, fear, loneliness, boredom and depression. The false hunger we experience when we are tense is most often mentally induced, designed to provide an outlet for our nervousness and anxieties.

As Yogi Desai teaches, our society's excessive food orientation and constant seeking of taste sensations is an effort to satisfy us superficially by dulling our inner yearnings. In fact, many of us have over-stimulated our appetites to the point where we no longer feel our bodies' needs. We have developed habits that detract from, rather than contribute to our health and spiritual well being and we have distorted the basic function of food to make it primarily a means to satisfy our sense of taste and smell. We need to rediscover the natural hunger that craves natural foods.

Loss of natural hunger is the cause of most over-eating. Because we don't derive full satisfaction from what we eat, we create an unhealthy cycle by eating more in an effort to reach a greater level of satisfaction. We have forgotten the true role of eating, which is to provide nourishment and sustain life so we can explore and develop our higher potentials.

To obtain maximum enjoyment and health benefits from food, we need to develop the art of conscious eating. This means eating with a full awareness of where, how, why and what, we are eating. It means slowing down and devoting our full attention to the actual eating process.

To transform our negative habits, we must first recognize our personal eating habits. A good way to do this is to keep a food-events journal. List the time, food eaten, reason for eating and how you felt before, during and after eating. Be honest, but accepting of yourself and don't judge what you find as good or bad. There are too many

so-called experts with too many books containing too many rules, most contradicting each other on what is good for us and what is not; so try not to be intimidated by them.

Once you have determined your personal habits, consider the following guidelines and use them when and if they feel right for you:

*GUIDELINES FOR CONSCIOUS EATING:*

1. Give thanks for the food you are about to eat; then give yourself enough time to eat it.
2. Eat only when hungry. (Drink when thirsty; water is usually best.)
3. Select the proper amount and type of food for your unique, individual system.
4. Avoid eating when you are very angry, very excited, very tense or very tired.
5. Eat in a pleasant atmosphere. (No news programs! Relaxing music is great.)
6. Eat regularly and at specific times when possible.
7. Enjoy what you do eat. (No remorse after eating, either!)
8. Take one small bite at a time and chew thoroughly. (Chew your food to liquid.)
9. Make eating an act of meditation; focus on your chewing and digestive process. Know that your body is absorbing all the nutrients it needs to bring you energy and harmony.
10. After eating, relax, and listen to your body's feedback about the experience.

Learning to eat consciously happens gradually; there will be occasions when you forget or choose not to pay attention to your body's needs. When this happens to you, just accept yourself. Changing old habits – like eating an apple – can best be accomplished by taking one bite at a time. ~