

 **Days 11-20**

**Put food in its place**

*Excerpt:*

*Day 13 Oops, I forgot to eat!*

*Day 14 Morning affects evening*

*Day 15 First two bites*

*Day 16 Nurturing power of food*

*Day 17 Stop wasting food*

## Oops, I forgot to eat!

**I**t's been a crazy day. You've attended meetings, answered numerous telephone calls and e-mails, then pushed to meet the deadline on a major project. Suddenly, you look up at the clock and realize you completely missed lunch.

Now you're famished, so you eat whatever you can get your hands on quickly. Often that ends up being a candy bar or a small handful of nuts from your desk drawer. So much for getting quality fuel!

Skipping meals might sound like an easy way to lose weight. But it rarely works because your body outsmarts your plan. Whenever you go long periods without fuel, your body protects itself by hoarding some of the calories for later use. You also risk getting a late-day energy slump, which leads to even more eating struggles.

### **Saving up calories**

Whenever Susan knows she's having a big dinner at night, she avoids eating all day. In her mind, she's *saving up* the calories so she'll have lots of room for her favorite foods. Unfortunately, this pattern tends to do the opposite of what Susan intended.

In reality, our bodies know how to manage fuel sources very efficiently. When you undereat during the day, your body believes it may not get enough food, so it conserves what does come in. Even if Susan eats the same total number of calories as usual, her body will store a portion of that large evening meal, causing her to gain weight.

In the same way, if you routinely follow a one-meal-a-day plan, your body will train itself to get by on a small amount of food. Eventually, it adapts so well to the low-calorie level that it refuses to lose weight.

### **You have no choice**

During the years when I was working in hospitals, I knew a diabetic nurse named Ellen. While the rest of us complained that we couldn't stop for lunch, Ellen always found time to eat her meals and snacks. She said, "I don't have a choice. If I don't eat, I'll pass out and I won't be any help at all."

You don't have to be diabetic to use this strategy. Just make it a habit to tell yourself, "I have no choice." By convincing yourself that skipping meals is *not* an option, you'll work a lot harder to routinely take care of your fuel needs.



#### ***Today***

- Write down the times of the day when you plan to eat your meals and snacks.
- Make an effort to eat within 30 minutes of these scheduled times. At the end of the day, review your eating patterns to see how well you did.
- If you tend to skip meals or forget to eat, set an alarm to remind yourself when it's time for fuel.

## Morning affects evening

**D**o you ever start munching late in the day, then snack your way through the rest of the afternoon and the evening? If you have problems with late-day eating, take a look at what you did earlier in the day. Often struggles with hunger, fatigue and food cravings in the afternoon or evening relate to how you ate in the morning.

### **Breakfast and hunger**

Are you usually a breakfast eater? Or do you avoid eating in the mornings because it seems to make you feel hungry all day? When you routinely skip breakfast, your digestive tract stays dormant until you finally give it food.

If you surprise your stomach one morning by unexpectedly eating breakfast, it secretes more digestive acid than the food requires, causing hunger pangs to linger for several hours.

Don't skip breakfast in an attempt to avoid this struggle with hunger. If you eat breakfast *every day*, you'll eventually retrain your stomach to manage food better in the mornings. It may take time for your body to adjust, but after a week on your new schedule, your all-day hunger will disappear.

You also may need to evaluate the timing of your fuel stops and begin eating more often. When you don't give your body enough fuel during the early part of the day, by late in the afternoon, it starts screaming for food.

Worse yet, your system may have a hard time catching up. This can actually make you keep nibbling all evening, even after you've eaten a large dinner.

## Afternoon droop

Are you often famished and exhausted when you get home from work? By this time of day, fatigue and hunger can easily ruin your judgment about eating. To manage this late-day, high-risk time, *always* eat a snack sometime between three and four o'clock in the afternoon.

Look for healthy fuel sources that include both protein and carbohydrates. For example, you might have an apple along with a mozzarella cheese stick or combine a few slices of deli turkey with some raw vegetables. Many of the commercial energy bars also contain a good balance of both nutrients. The protein in the food will slow down the digestive process, giving you a long-lasting energy boost from the snack.



### *Today*

- Set a goal of eating breakfast every day for the next week. In your notebook, record what you ate.
- If you wish, you can split your breakfast into two mini-meals and eat the second one mid-morning.
- Plan a couple of options for late-afternoon snacks. List them in your notebook so you'll remember your ideas.

## First two bites

**P**icture your favorite dessert on the table in front of you. Maybe it's a piece of your mom's homemade apple pie, a slice of turtle cheesecake or a bowl of rocky road ice cream.

As you take the first bite, you swoon with pleasure. Wow, is this ever good! Excited to have more, you reach for another bite, marveling at how great it tastes.

More bites, then still more, and soon it's gone. But did you really notice the rest of the food? Initially, you appreciated its flavor and texture, but then you stopped paying attention and simply ate until you finished it off.

### **Power of the first two bites**

You may not realize it, but the *first two bites* of any food will always have the most flavor. If you keep eating after that, you're just "feeding." Of course, if you're physically hungry, eating more of the food serves a purpose.

But if you're wanting to appreciate the flavor, no matter how much you eat, the taste won't get any more wonderful than those first two bites. Instead of always taking in lots of extra calories, why not take advantage of the way your taste buds actually work?

With any food that you love, eat the first two bites very slowly, noticing details such as the cinnamon in the apple pie or the soft caramel swirl in the cheesecake. Close your eyes and delight in the taste. Allow yourself to completely absorb the texture and flavor of the food.

### **Is it worth eating more?**

After you finish those two bites, decide if you truly need more. In most cases, you don't. Once in a while, a food will taste so phenomenal that it's worth the mountain of calories and fat grams it contains. But in reality, very few types of candy, cookies or even cheesecake fit into that category.

Suppose you're eating one of your favorite desserts such as a chocolate brownie. When you really pay close attention to the taste, you may decide this one isn't as special as you'd anticipated. If that's the case, stop eating. Tell yourself you've gotten what you needed from it. Then either toss or give away the rest so you aren't tempted to eat something that just isn't all that great.



#### ***Today***

- Choose one of your favorite foods such as carrot cake, then focus on all the details and tastes of the first two bites. Let yourself appreciate the flavors.
- After the first two bites, stop eating and get rid of the rest of the food. In your notebook, write down the details about this experience.
- With each food you eat today, pay close attention to the first two bites. Notice how they taste in comparison to the rest of the food.

## Nurturing power of food

**W**hen you're feeling stressed or sad or lonely, food does seem to make you feel better. At least initially, it calms your anger or anxiety and lifts your spirits. But how long does food keep working?

As you know, the first two bites of any food have the most impact on your taste buds. But they're also the only ones that have any *emotional power!* Once you finish those first bites, you'll have received whatever benefits the food can do for you. Eating more of it simply won't bring you additional satisfaction or make you feel any better.

### **You're done!**

After a long, stressful day, Kathy grabbed a pint of chocolate cherry ice cream from the freezer, then sank into her couch. As she ate the ice cream straight from the carton, she kept thinking, "Maybe this is the bite that will do it." Of course, it never worked. She just felt worse.

If you're eating as a way to feel nurtured or calmed, you'll usually experience some level of those feelings right away. But continuing to eat won't bring any more satisfaction or make you feel better and better. In fact, at some point, you'll probably start to feel frustrated and disappointed with your behavior instead of being healed by the food.

Once you understand that eating more won't continue to improve your emotional state, you can actually use this in your favor. With a little effort, you can train yourself to feel better after eating only a small amount of nurturing food.

## Letting food work

In weight-loss seminars, I often hand out small chocolate-chip cookies. Then I invite class participants to eat *two bites* of their cookies while allowing themselves to feel nurtured and emotionally soothed by them.

After they finish those first two bites, I ask them to throw away the remainder of their cookies. Some people can hardly bear to do this. Yet at the same time, they admit those two bites were completely satisfying, and they really didn't need to eat any more.



### *Today*

- Intentionally eat something that will help you feel better. Soak up the pleasure from a delicious piece of chocolate. Allow yourself the comfort of eating your favorite ice cream or a luscious cinnamon roll. Eliminate any thoughts of guilt or remorse as you eat this food.
- *After two bites, stop!* Remind yourself that your needs have been met and eating more of the food won't increase your healing level. Then give away or toss whatever food is left.
- Write about how you felt doing this exercise. Also, notice what level of satisfaction you experienced as you ate the first two bites of the food.

## Stop wasting food

**D**o you tend to always clean your plate? As a child, were you told you should never waste food? Unfortunately, old rules about eating all of your food can ruin your diet plan.

Think about where you first heard those clean-your-plate messages. When you were growing up, did people around you cringe if food was wasted? Were you praised for eating it all? Maybe you were taught that leaving food behind wasn't fair to the starving children in the world.

Of course, not wasting food makes total sense. In some cases, you can prevent having too much food in the first place by cooking smaller amounts or sharing meals at restaurants. But even with careful planning, sometimes you'll be stuck with extra food you don't need. Eventually, you have to learn to manage leftovers without eating all of them.

### **It's wasted anyway**

The eat-it-all rule is one of the hardest ones for most people to break. But when you fill your car with gas, you don't keep pumping after the tank is full, spilling the fuel on the ground. So why would you do this with your body?

Here's a new way to look at those old rules around cleaning your plate:

*Every time you eat food your body doesn't need,  
you are wasting it!*

So now you have a choice. You can get rid of leftover food by throwing it away or by eating it. Either way, it's wasted.

## **Eating your child's leftovers**

The same thing is true when your children tend to leave food behind. Certainly, it's important to teach kids a sense of responsibility around food. But often, they simply take more than they can finish. If you can't bear to throw away their leftovers, just remind yourself that *if you eat it, the food is wasted*.

Starting today, make a commitment that you will not waste food by putting it into your body. This mental shift may not come easily. But if you're serious about managing your weight, you have to let go of cleaning your plate. If you can't do this, you'll probably continue to struggle with reaching your goals.



### ***Today***

- Throw some food away. It can be a tiny amount or a large amount. Remember, by wasting it into the garbage, you're not wasting it into yourself.
- In your journal, list the foods you let go of today. Make a note about how it felt to throw food away, then add a few thoughts on how you'll manage leftover food in the future.
- Write down a few ways you can prevent having excess food around in the first place.