



7 Ways to Nourish Your Whole Self

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Research shows us that, yes, food is a gateway to our personal growth!

Eating is an essential part of all of our lives – we simply can't escape it. How we choose to experience food is up to us as individuals. We can think of food as pure physical nourishment – to give us the calories we need to function – to move, speak, and think. Or, we can expand our vision to encompass eating as something that connects us to our inner and outer landscapes – our emotions, creativity, mind, heart, truth, expression, intuition, and need for connection with the environment, people, animals, plants, earth, water, planet, and universe.



We interact with food and eating on an average of 200 times daily. If we tally up our daily interactions and calculate a lifetime of interactions with food and eating, we might reach close to 6 million opportunities to heal our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual selves through the amazing miracle of a meal. Remember that, how we eat is how we live, and how we live is how we eat. By becoming aware of your eating, you have the potential to change your life in a great, big, huge way.

As you can already see, I am not your typical nutritionist. Although I've had much academic training in the scientific aspects of nutrition through my Master's and Doctorate degrees, I have also been taught ancient medical and spiritual traditions such as yoga, Ayurveda, Native American healing, and energy medicine. I have taken the best of my scientific knowledge and integrated it with an amalgam of ancient spirituality to create a unique approach to food, health, and healing. I believe that our interface with food needs to be practical as much as it needs to be poetic; literal as much as symbolic; and science-based as much as spiritually-steeped. My approach unites the best of opposites!

The intention of this booklet and the Food & Spirit™ work is to help guide you to the place of the essential "I"s of the eating experience — Instinct, Intuition, Inspiration, and Information.

I look forward to the unfolding of insight into your physical and spiritual nourishment that you will experience in this booklet, and I wish you a journey to inner and outer bliss with every bite you take!

Nourishing blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Deanna Minich



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REPORT

7 Ways to Nourish Your Whole Self

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on embarking on this journey to wellness and wholeness through foods and eating! This booklet provides you with an analysis of the intersections between foods, eating, and aspects of your life. Many people are surprised to find out that foods can impact more than just our physical body, and that their effects can ripple through the entirety of our being, including:

- Our PHYSICAL BODY and our ability to feel grounded and secure; (ROOT)
- Our EMOTIONS and our ability to feel creative and open to the flow of what is coming through us to express; (FLOW)
- Our sense of PERSONAL POWER and our ability to feel confident and radiant; (FIRE)
- Our sense of EXPANSION IN OUR HEART and our ability to love and serve ourselves and others; (LOVE)
- Our sense of EXPRESSION FROM OUR THROAT and our ability to speak our truth and be heard; (TRUTH)
- Our INTUITION and our ability to tap into our internal insight and wisdom; (INSIGHT)
- Our sense of CONNECTION with all of life and our ability to integrate our body with our soul. (SPIRIT)

Indeed, we are multi-faceted beings. It is almost as though we are like a web – if you pluck a thread somewhere in the web, chances are it will be felt in the entire structure. Ancient traditions have long recognized our complex, holistic nature, and modern science is on the forefront of acknowledging the interconnection of body systems.

In this booklet, you will gain scientific and creative insight on how your whole being is relating to foods and eating. You will learn about how your eating relates to these seven aspects of the self. As you navigate this information, I encourage you to allow your own inner guide to take you through what you feel comfortable with...



CHAPTER 1

FOODS FOR YOUR ROOT

Eating for Stability

OVERVIEW

Much of what you do and how you live is connected to the vitality of your physical body. The body is a vehicle for allowing passions, desires, and dreams to unfold in this physical reality. When we are in sync with our physical self, we will feel capable to survive adequately, even in a world of change and instability.

Along with sleep, sex, water, and air, one of the most important aspects of survival is food. Your physical body needs food to survive – it is one of the primal acts that all human beings on the planet must take part in to some extent to exist. Eating results in a sense of being “grounded,” or “rooted” into the physical body. After a meal, we feel the physical anchoring of food in our stomach, followed by the subsequent surge of energy extracted from the food which imparts us with a sense of stability. After eating, we might feel more present or able to concentrate on the task at hand because we are activated fully in our bodies (through altering our blood sugar, hormones, and neurotransmitters) and we have calories to perform. At a basic level, the physical body is also connected to key elements that are formed from a very young age by our family patterns - aspects like safety, trust, and boundaries. When we are grounded in these fundamentals of everyday living, we feel secure and at ease in our physical bodies, ultimately translating into our relationship with foods and our eating practices and patterns.

PROMOTE HEALTHY GROUNDING THROUGH EATING

HONOR YOUR BODY’S WISDOM: One of the most core principles when it comes to eating is to know your body and to be in touch with your sense of instinct. All too often we look to books on “how to eat” to tell us what we need. We might ask

the wait staff at a restaurant what to order. Since most people are out of touch with their bodies, it may be difficult for them to know what, how, and when to eat. Try to get in touch with listening to your body by observing its natural rhythm rather than your intellectually-imposed rhythm. See if there are certain foods that your body instinctually needs by simply asking the part of you that feels safe and secure what you need. Practice trusting the response. The dialogue may be as simple as walking into your kitchen (or restaurant), feeling your toes on the floor to ground you, and asking the “safe place” within you what you’d like to have or what you need to have. Another point is that being out of touch with the body usually means being unable to discern physical hunger cues. Frequently, these signals are not recognized due to a lack of bodily awareness. Practice checking in with your body on food choices. What language does your body use to tell you what to eat and when? Do you feel a sensation in your gut? Does your energy level drop? Are you listening to the subtlety of these messages and honoring them? One example is to assess your hunger before and after a meal to see how you feel on the continuum from “ravenous” to “uncomfortably full”. Hopefully, you will stay comfortably in between the two extremes, at the level of “satisfied”. Also, note whether some foods make you feel “grounded” or “ungrounded”.

FEEL SAFE: Survival is linked to feeling safe and secure. When we don’t feel safe in our environment, or we perceive our body as a threat to our security, we may change our eating patterns, to either not eating or overeating. Neglecting our body needs by refusing or denying ourselves foods could indicate that we need to heal our ability to feel secure and safe in our body. We may question our existence, and through not eating, we slowly wither away as a physical being. On the flip side, more and more people worldwide are becoming overweight or obese. Certainly there are many contributors to excess body weight, including lifestyle behaviors such as eating poorly and remaining sedentary.



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However, if we look deeper to unearth some other causes, we may find that excess weight may be connected to feeling unsafe in one's body. Instead of hiding ourselves in the shadow of too much food, we can bring out the best of us by eating according to our bodies' needs. When we eat according to our body's needs our mind remains sharp and our heart strong. We can focus on the moment and give attention to any thoughts, words, or actions that float into our consciousness. You may want to work with a qualified health professional and/or journal on what aspects of eating, your environment, or your body make you feel unsafe, or how you may feel safe without looking to food. Cultivate a "safe place" or refuge internally and within your living space. Use that place within to create a dialogue about food.

ENGAGE IN HEALTHY SOCIAL EATING: Feeling grounded and safe is often connected to feeling part of a "tribe" or community – or having loved ones support you. When we do not feel safe or supported by the tribe, we may not be comfortable eating with a community or being a part of traditions created by a family. As a result, social eating can be a stressful event, particularly family gatherings. Some strategies to overcome the fear involved may include creating your own traditions or bringing a dish to add to the mix. Give some thought to the belief patterns about foods and eating that you inherited from your family and decide whether these are still valid for you. If not, create new belief patterns and enforce them with your new way of eating. You may want to create a community of individuals with like-minded thoughts about eating to get together on a regular basis to share a meal.

SPECIFIC FOODS FOR GROUNDING

PROTEIN: Protein assists us in reestablishing and strengthening our integration with the earthy,

physical vibration within us, bringing us back to our roots. It makes us feel heavy and slower moving, a welcome feeling if we are feeling fragmented or spacey. Animal proteins (e.g., dairy, egg, meat) are particularly grounding since their origin is from some of the most grounded creatures - animals who are "sure-footed" with up to four feet on the earth and in contact with their instinctual selves. Vegetable protein (e.g., legumes) works perfectly for those who are vegetarian. Note that too much protein can have the reverse effect, literally creating too much rigidity and stability and the feeling of staying stuck in stagnation. Vary your protein sources to get a sampling of different degrees of "grounding".

MINERALS: Minerals, which are stable compounds from the Earth's crust, impart structure and stability to the body. For example, calcium is needed to form a strong skeleton. Iron is required for the structure of red blood cells so they can carry oxygen to tissues, allowing them to function. Foods high in minerals such as dairy foods or dark-green leafy vegetables high in calcium would be nourishing to the physical structure of the body. Nuts, grains and seeds typically contain minerals such as zinc and copper to help with protein synthesis in the body.

ROOT VEGETABLES: These tenacious vegetables grow deep within the dark, quiet earth, thereby embodying cool, centered, earthy energy. The long roots and the insoluble fiber they contain help us to feel bulk within our gastrointestinal tract to give us a feeling of anchoring, in addition to sweeping through substances that we need to let go of. The energy of root vegetables allows us the ability to nestle into our internal, lower core and to be comfortable and safe in its depth and stillness. Examples of grounding root vegetables include beets, turnips, parsnips, taro, burdock, and rutabaga.



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RED-COLORED FOODS: The color red is symbolic of grounding – it represents the blood, which serves our being by keeping us infused with the life force of oxygen and nutrients. In addition to the vibration of the color of red, red-colored foods usually contain relatively high levels of vitamin C, a vitamin utilized by several body parts that connect to structure and survival such as the skeleton, gums, skin, and adrenals (“fight-or-flight” response). These foods also contain protective components like the red-colored carotenoid, lycopene, to help defend our body from attack by reactive compounds. Examples of red-colored foods include tomatoes, strawberries, raspberries, watermelon, and cherries.





CHAPTER 2

FOODS FOR YOUR FLOW

Eating with Creativity

OVERVIEW

Within the grounded structure of the physical body, there is an energy that is dynamic and flowing, which is often associated with emotions and creativity. Indeed, we need to let “e-motions” (energy in motion) move through our physical body so they do not stagnate in any one place to create symptoms or disease. Issues relating to food and emotions are very much intertwined. In fact, it has been estimated that over 75% of overeating can be attributed to emotions. When we feel out of control with our ability to process emotions, we may feel tempted to stuff them down with food to feel a sense of temporary comfort. Since emotions are intimately enmeshed with our creative spirit, it helps to tap into this force, so that our emotions can surface and release. Conversely, when we lose sight of our creativity due to lack of time or stress, we indirectly affect our ability to express emotions. Emotions and creativity are joined together, and are associated with other aspects such as playfulness, openness, pleasure, sensuality, and flexibility. When connected to these elements of our being, we are able to extend into the experience of eating that goes beyond function and rigidity, and into the realm of freedom, fluidity, and flexibility (“going with the flow”).

PROMOTE HEALTHY FLOW THROUGH EATING

SPEND TIME TO CREATE MEALS: We have become consumers of convenience and dashboard diners, eating in our cars, in the spirit of always “being on the run.” We may be confined to a car for a long commute or to a cubicle in an office for a long day, which may translate into a certain structure of life that stifles our creativity and motivation for preparing meals. As a result of “containment,” we may buy predominantly processed foods for the sake of eating fast and without having to put energy into creating something. By balancing the intake of

prepared foods with the process of developing a meal from scratch, we tap into our ability to be creative rather than give our creative power over to store-bought processed foods. Savor the gift of creating a meal – let it flourish by hand-selecting items at a grocery store or farmer’s market; whirl in the scents and aromas within the sanctuary of your kitchen; take time to become stimulated through tastes and colors; design a plateful of food in a unique way; or even invent new ways of eating through different silverware or paint your own bowl to eat from. The possibilities of creation through foods and eating are truly endless! And through this vehicle of creation, you allow emotions to flow in the process.

PAY ATTENTION TO SENSES WHEN EATING: You have probably heard about eating “mindlessly”, but you may also agree that many people eat “senselessly” – or without their five-player team of bodily senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell). Tune in to the here-and-now when you are selecting, preparing, or eating food so that you can get the most out of your eating experience. When you allow your senses to flow, you might realize just how brightly colored your fruits are, how pungent curry tastes, how beautifully textured a root vegetable is, or how savory a bowl of soup smells. In essence, eating becomes poetic and enjoyable. You may experience more appreciation for foods than you ever have. When you are aware of what you are eating and doing through your senses, you may tend to eat less because your experience of being in touch with your body will be much more fulfilling rather than having to stuff down some more bites of food. Eating one blueberry and savoring its feel, taste, and appearance may be all you need in that moment!

ENGAGE IN PLAYFUL EATING: Children embody unbridled creativity, and you may recall how you ate when you were young – you were likely messy, ate with your fingers, didn’t finish everything at once, or played with your food on your plate. Our creative self yearns for play and as hard-working, responsible, structured adults, we may not get



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enough playfulness sprinkled throughout our daily routine. Honor the flow within by allowing yourself to tap into their inner child's sense of play when it comes to eating.

EAT SPECIFIC FOODS FOR THE FLOW

WATER: There is nothing more conducive to establishing flow in the body than ensuring we are properly hydrated. It's one of the simplest things we can do, yet most of us overlook its importance. We are 60-80% water and the high water content is responsible for helping us to flow and function internally – with its help, our cells are able to transport nutrients, toxins, and waste products. Not only is drinking water essential, but eating foods high in water content, such as vegetables and fruits, will support body flow and hydration. Aim for at least 6 to 8 glasses of water per day (add a lime or lemon if you'd like some flavor), sipped throughout the day so that you can keep your inner and outer selves fluid and flowing. Allow yourself more fluid if you are more physically active or you are sweating more profusely due to warmer temperatures. Minimize drinks that have a dehydrating effect, like coffee.

FATS & OILS: Many people are "fat-phobic" or afraid of eating fat because they think they will become fat. Unfortunately, the low-fat trend of the early 1990s has resulted in lingering false notions about the role of fat in the diet. If we are missing certain fats that our bodies cannot make (called "essential fatty acids"), then our skin becomes dry and scaly, our behavior changes to make us more irritable and depressed, and we don't learn as well. These essential fats are wiggly, flowing fats that are needed by the cell membranes for important functions related to flow and fluidity. Don't skimp on these fats! Make sure that you get enough of the pivotal omega-3 fats from food or supplement sources: flaxseed oil, fish oil, salmon, leafy, green vegetables, nuts and seeds.

FISH: Fish live in the water, and, therefore, symbolically embody the energy of flow and fluidity. Salmon is one of the most ideal foods for flow since it contains an appreciable, healthy amount of essential, fluid fats. Additionally, its flesh is the color orange, the color associated with creativity. Other types of low-mercury-containing fish and seafood are also good to include (unless you have a shellfish allergy): shrimp, canned light tuna, sardines, tilapia, perch, mackerel, pollock, and catfish.

FOODS HIGH IN FIBER: Fiber comes in two forms in plant foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds: insoluble and soluble. Insoluble fibers like cellulose, lignin, and hemicellulose, help to provide bulk and stimulate the inherent peristaltic action in the intestines to keep them flowing, pushing matter through for excretion. Examples include: whole grains, seeds, nuts, zucchini, celery, broccoli, cabbage, onions, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, green beans, dark leafy vegetables, fruit, and root vegetable skins. Soluble fibers like pectin, gums, and mucilage, swell into a gel when in contact with water, and slow the absorption of nutrients in foods. Examples include: oatmeal, apples, oranges, pears, strawberries, nuts, flaxseeds, beans, dried peas, blueberries, psyllium, cucumbers, celery, and carrots.

ORANGE-COLORED FOODS: The color orange is symbolic of creativity – it represents a juicy force that disperses throughout our being, allowing for our cells to flow with the rhythm of life. In addition to feeding on the vibrant vibration of the color of orange, we can become nourished through orange-colored compounds like carotenoids (for example, beta-carotene), a family of nutrients that can be incorporated into cell membranes for protection against free radicals. Examples include carrots, pumpkin, mandarins, sweet potatoes, yams, nectarines, peaches, papayas, and cantaloupe.





CHAPTER 3

FOODS FOR YOUR FIRE

Eating with Confidence

OVERVIEW

We live in a power-hungry, stress-filled society that is always expecting more and more of us. Our ability to maintain balance in the midst of chaos becomes increasingly difficult when demands and responsibilities begin to pile high. We try to accommodate and stay in control by saying “yes” when we really mean “no,” and after a short while, we feel burdened with life and everyday events become drudgery. Finally, with too much energy going out, we collapse in utter exhaustion. Conversely, when there is an excessive amount of energy being taken in, there may be an inability to integrate this energy with the self. Often, the imbalance manifests as conditions that represent stagnation and blocks, including weight gain in the abdomen or metabolic issues like type 2 diabetes, particularly when the individual takes in energy and cannot balance the intake with the output. Harnessing our inner sense of balance and transformation can assist us in creating an integrated, powerful exchange of energy in and out of the body in a way that generates the radiance of “presence”. When we are the master of our own energy, we are able to transform the input provided to us into a form that we can assimilate or let go of, resulting in confidence, endurance, empowerment, and achievement in its highest capacity.

PROMOTE A HEALTHY POWER THROUGH EATING

GET IN TOUCH WITH OUR HUNGER GAUGE: Often, we lose sight of our innate sense of physical hunger and responding to our bodies’ physical cues to eat due to the demands of a busy life. We may forget to eat, or we may undereat or overeat without realizing it. By tapping into our internal rhythm to eat, and eating regularly, we will help ourselves to keep our internal power rather than giving it over to irregular eating times and over or under doing our eating. Sometimes we have to retrain ourselves to

be in touch with senses of physical hunger through the signals the body provides. Many of us “think” our way into hunger or assess it intellectually, rather than connecting to the power of our digestive system as the ultimate gauge. Try rating your hunger before and after eating to tap into how well you are maintaining your fuel reserves. If you find yourself “stuffed” after a meal, you may have inundated your energy input, placing an additional burden on your digestive system to process. Aim for about 80% fullness, or a point at which you are no longer hungry. A rough guideline is to eat to the level at which you are able to take a light walk after eating.

KNOW THY FUEL: Eating is meant to energize you rather than deplete your reserves. There are certain foods that give you the punch of power you need and others that seem to drain you of your power, or take your power away. You may find yourself eating these foods even though you know they “run you down”. An example of foods that can rob you of energy when consumed in excess is sugar. Added sugars are ubiquitous in the food supply – even in the least expected items like salad dressings, ketchups, sauces. Although they provide an initial burst of energy, in the long run, they will take your energy because of the constant rollercoaster of high spikes of glucose (sugar) followed by a surge of insulin (hormone that processes glucose in your blood) that can lead to dips in blood glucose and a perpetuation of eating foods high in sugar to keep the balance. The goal is to stay on an even keel with sugars by balancing their intake with dietary fibers. Avoid artificial sweeteners as they can set you up for additional cravings and metabolic imbalance. You might start laying the groundwork for chronic diseases of metabolism like type 2 diabetes and obesity if you continue to imbalance your energy by making food choices that deplete you more than energize you, along with not exercising.

SCHEDULE REGULAR EATING TIMES: You may want to start by first creating a regular eating



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schedule – eating small meals 4 to 6 times per day - so that you can retrain yourself to get in touch with your eating rhythm. Studies have shown that eating more frequent meals throughout the day helps us to maintain our blood sugar, and therefore, gives more energy. Feeding yourself more regularly will ensure that you have the fuel you need to keep going without succumbing to cravings or dips in energy.

EAT SPECIFIC FOODS FOR THE FIRE

CARBOHYDRATES: There are different types of carbohydrates, ranging from simple sugars to complex starches. If we need a slow release of energy from our food in order to have a consistent, steady stream of energy for us to be active, we would be best served to eat “low glycemic index” carbohydrates. These carbohydrates allow for the sustained release of glucose (sugar) into the blood from food. Examples include: bean soups, cooked beans (e.g., lentils, black, pinto, garbanzo), nuts and nut butters, vegetables, apples, berries, cherries, grapefruit, pears, and whole grains. Conversely, foods that have a high glycemic index are those that are “quick-fix,” high-energy foods that deplete our energy and include foods such as high-sugar desserts (e.g., cakes, cookies, donuts, ice cream, candies), starchy snack foods (e.g., crackers, potato chips, tortilla chips), starchy vegetables (e.g., corn and white potatoes), fruit juices with added sugar, processed breakfast cereals, white rice and white rice bread products (e.g., bagels, muffins, sliced bread). The general guideline is to get the best quality of low-glycemic impact carbohydrate from whole foods rather than from processed foods that have been stripped of essential nutrients.

In addition to the type of carbohydrate, it is also worthwhile to note the quantity of carbohydrates consumed in the diet. If we eat too many carbohydrates for our bodily needs, we create a deluge of energy input. If we eat too little for our body requirements, we do not equip it with the

energy it needs to have momentum and direction. To empower our being with the energy it needs, we have to constantly be in touch with our “fuel” gauge, balancing the different carbohydrates in the diet in amount and type, to give us the return we need for radiance and power.

FOODS CONTAINING SOLUBLE FIBER: Fiber content of carbohydrate is a good marker of the amount of sustained energy your body will receive from the carbohydrate. If a food is high in fiber, you will receive adequate amounts of energy over time to fuel your actions. If a food is low in fiber and high in simple sugars, your energy will be erratic – initially it will be very high but then it will plummet. Specifically, soluble fibers have a structure that enables it to swell in the presence of fluid. They become viscous and gel-like and are able to form a matrix to trap particles like sugars so they are released slowly into the bloodstream. Examples of soluble fiber-containing foods include whole grains (e.g., oatmeal), fruits (e.g., apples, oranges, pears, strawberries, blueberries), legumes, nuts, seeds, and vegetables (e.g., cucumbers, celery and carrots).

YELLOW-COLORED FOODS: The color yellow is symbolic of power – it represents the radiance of self-confidence and the fire of endurance. The color feeds our being with a specific vibration, and also reflects the presence of yellow-colored plant compounds like lutein. Lutein is a compound from the family of carotenoids that protects cells against an attack from the effects of too much energy in the body and overactive metabolism. It has been shown to concentrate in certain parts of the body, such as the back of the eye (macula) and in the skin, both areas where there can be high (ultraviolet) light exposure. Lutein may be able to assist with protecting these tissues from damage created by reactions to light that involve free radicals. Lutein-containing foods include: kale (raw has more than cooked), spinach, turnip greens, collard



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greens, fresh corn, and eggs. Additionally, citrus bioflavonoids found in foods such as lemons and grapefruit can be helpful for reducing inflammation, as well as promoting healthy circulation.





CHAPTER 4

FOODS FOR YOUR LOVE

Eating with Gratitude

OVERVIEW

There is no greater food than love. Human beings thrive on it. We feed ourselves with symbols of the heart plastered on t-shirts, bumper stickers, books, and cards. In several cultures, food is used to show love. The message being delivered on many levels is that if we care about someone, we share food with them, whether preparing it for them, serving it, or even eating with them. Frequently, love travels through the conduit of food. Also, we may overlook love for ourselves, but it is through the act of eating that we show we value and love our bodies. Religious traditions have used the phrase, “Your body is your temple.” Indeed, loving and caring for ourselves implies providing our bodies with quality nourishment. The heart is the inner fulcrum that aligns to our eating experience. Without a solid foundation of love of self and a free, open heart, we may not be lovingly tapped into the foods we need for our bodies in any given moment. A healthy, balanced sense of expansion in the heart can harmonize feelings and love for others without compromising the expression of feelings and love of self. Those who are truly tapped into their wellspring of self-love will let their passions be their guiding principle for decision-making, or, in other words, they will “follow their heart,” connecting in the highest way to related qualities of forgiveness, gratitude, love and service.

PROMOTE HEALTHY LOVE THROUGH EATING:

GROW, EAT, AND SERVE FOOD WITH LOVE:

There is a good chance that you have had a meal made with love, or had a meal carefully, lovingly created, prepared, and served to you. It is quite a treat to have nurturing baked into your nourishment, as it feeds the body along with the spirit. When food marinades in love, it is saturated with a high vibration, along with making it taste sweeter and

more flavorful. People who buy organically grown food claim that it tastes better than conventionally-grown food when compared side by side, even when they do not know which one is which. There certainly is an element of ‘love’ that appears to go into organic gardening that you don’t find in mass, industrial farming. And when we make the selection for organic food, we are actively tapping into the energetic lineage of love that has grown into the food imparted from the sun, stars, moon, sky, farmer, harvester and grocer. An easy exercise to cultivate more love in your food is the following: Before starting to eat a meal, shift your consciousness from your head into your heart; imagine your heart being filled with love; to come into this place, you may need to “feel” love from a previous memory or experience, or simply conjure it up; allow your food to bask in this feeling of love for 20 to 30 seconds. You can also eat from heart-shaped bowls, or put heart stickers on your refrigerator, blender, kitchen cabinets, drinking container, etc., to keep the spirit of love alive in your food surroundings!

GIVE THANKS FOR A MEAL: Gratitude is the nourishment of the heart. When we give thanks for a meal, our heart expands in kind, like a rose coming into full spiraled blossom, extending to reach its petals as far as they can go. Allow for more expansion in your heart by giving thanks for your meals, to the person who prepared it (even if it’s yourself!), to the animals and plants that gave their lives so that you would be nourished, and to all the elements of nature – the wind, rain, sun, stars, and moon – for gracing your meal with the necessary natural elements for growth. You may want to create a “gratitude prayer” or “grace” to accompany your meals in more of a ritualistic way.

SHARE MEALS WITH OTHERS: Love grows exponentially when it is shared. By loving others, we never become depleted of love. In fact, quite the opposite! However, that said, it’s important to balance love of others with love of self. Our



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wellspring of love comes from our healthy self-love and self-esteem first. In much the same way, sharing meals with others feeds our heart. The more we share the more nourishment that is available to all. Try inviting others over to eat and experiment with new recipes – this is the perfect meal for inviting expansion into the realm of the heart. Eating in a communal setting is important for us as human beings as we are interdependent on each other. Our lives at their essence are truly about giving and receiving love. When we build walls of isolation or separation around us, we close off the heart and our ability to expand into the moment. Eating with others blossoms the heart with joy, especially when the meals are prepared and eaten together. Sharing with others could also mean donating food to a food bank or volunteering in a soup kitchen.

SPECIFIC FOODS FOR LOVE

VEGETABLES: The heart field expands in the presence of plant foods, and, in particular, vegetables. Vegetables contain the grounded energy of the earth combined with an expansion or blossoming into the world in the form of a flower, bud, or vegetable. On the whole, they provide the heart with the nutrients we need to extend the heart energy, including a number of minerals (like magnesium, potassium, and calcium), vitamins (such as folate and vitamin K1), as well as an array of plant compounds like phytosterols which help to block the absorption of cholesterol, and phytoestrogens which may help with interfering with some of the harmful effects of hormones.

CRUCIFEROUS VEGETABLES: Cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, collard greens, mustard greens, cabbage, bok choy, arugula, and Brussels sprouts, are especially balancing for the heart and serve our body through their protective mechanisms against conditions like cancer and inflammation. The cruciferous vegetables share a common stinky smell, indicating that they contain sulfur, a key compound for effectively

guarding the body from toxins. Sulfur-containing compounds such as sulforaphanes found in broccoli act as detoxification agents in the body. They work together with the intestines and liver to rid the body of contaminants.

SPROUTS AND LEAFY GREENS: The live, active components and nutrients of young sprouts, whether broccoli, alfalfa, or mung, along with leafy greens such as romaine, red leaf, butterhead, escarole, iceberg, and spinach, provide us with the vital, soothing healing elements that move us into expansion. These foods offer to our body substances that assist with circulation of blood throughout the vascular system in addition to protective compounds.

GREEN-COLORED FOODS: The color green is symbolic of healing and expansion – it represents an unfolding of love, service, and gratitude from within, similar to leaves on a tree, green and open to the rays of the sun. The color itself is very nourishing and healing, and is found extensively throughout the plant kingdom. On a nutritional level, green foods usually contain relatively high levels of plant compounds antioxidants like chlorophyll which is “king” of the plant-based antioxidants. High-chlorophyll foods such as spirulina, wheat grass, alfalfa grass, barley grass, and chlorella are claimed to be cleansing for the blood and circulation. In addition, green foods contain an essential nutrient known as folate. This nutrient, along with vitamin B6 and B12, is needed to lower levels of a reactive compound known as homocysteine in the blood. Studies indicate that there is a correlation between blood homocysteine levels and the incidence of heart disease. Examples of green-colored foods include asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, chard, greens (dandelion, mustard, kale, spinach, etc.), watercress, avocado, and zucchini.





CHAPTER 5

FOODS FOR YOUR TRUTH

Eating with Authenticity

OVERVIEW

As human beings, one of our unifying gifts is to express ourselves. The vehicle of the voice is one of the most impactful means of communication we are capable of. After all, we cannot fully release the chaotic, raw thoughts and emotions that arise within us without being able to speak, write, or communicate in some way. Therefore, our throat becomes a “birth canal” for the passions and feelings of the heart. It is important to be true to ourselves in all aspects of our lives, even when it comes to foods, eating, and our health. If we can’t say “no”, we may find ourselves in a predicament where we eat certain foods that don’t benefit our bodies, minds, or spirits. The expression energy held in the throat area holds not only the physical structure of the throat, but the ears, mouth, nose, thyroid gland, lips, and cheeks; therefore, this space is essential for our connection to food. It serves as the gateway for food to enter our physical body. When we come from a place of healthy expression by speaking clearly and truthfully, eating mindfully, and synchronizing all the activities that take place in this concentrated area (e.g., hearing, talking, tasting, chewing, breathing, and swallowing), we can anchor into related concepts of authenticity, mindfulness, choice, and integration.

PROMOTE A HEALTHY TRUTH THROUGH EATING

CHEW FOOD THOROUGHLY AND EAT WITH CONSCIOUSNESS: In the age of fast living, we are doing everything fast, including eating. If we are eating on the run, we may tend to shortcut our eating by gulping and swallowing rather than chewing and assimilating. If we are not chewing our food thoroughly, chances are we won’t be able to digest, absorb, and eventually, assimilate it into our body. Thus, chewing serves an important function. It is also essential that we put our awareness into eating so we get the most from the experience and do not feel like

overeating – chewing slowly helps us to accomplish this. Studies show that cultivating a daily practice of mindfulness can help to reduce stress, binge eating, and emotional eating. We can eat mindfully by reducing the number of activities we are engaging in while we are eating – turning off the computer, radio, and television; hanging up the phone; stopping the car and parking somewhere to eat rather than eating while driving. Or, we can be mindful even when we are in a busy restaurant if we simply acknowledge the “busy-ness” and stay aware and focused on the meal. When we eat with awareness, we may derive more satisfaction from the eating experience. Additionally, eating with consciousness keeps us in the moment and allows us to savor the flavor and joy of foods!

EAT HIGH-QUALITY FOODS FOR YOUR HIGHEST SELF: Every day we are bombarded with food choices. In fact, one study showed that, on average, a person makes 200 decisions about food and eating in one day! We may feel overwhelmed at all of the choices we are presented with: what to eat? How much to eat? With whom to eat? When to eat? Indeed, the information about nutrition always seems to be changing. Therefore, the goal is to listen to your authentic self when it comes to making a decision. Know that every choice you make bears an endless string of consequences. One meal can have lasting effects on the body for hours. The energy of expression is about choice, decisions, and options – but not just any – in its highest, most authentic form, it calls us to make the best choice for ourselves and our planet. Check out every choice you are presented with – see if it resonates with your inner truth. Eat foods that serve your body, mind, and spirit, and that serve the realm of nature – the animals, plants, and water. If we are eating meat from chickens kept in unhealthy, stressful conditions, we may take on the ‘energy’ of those chickens – frenetic, chaotic, and stressful. If we are eating foods that were grown using natural elements instead of synthetic, such as organically grown foods, we are taking in healthy, higher-quality nutrients and vibration.



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FOODS FOR YOUR TRUTH

Eating with Authenticity

BROADEN YOUR FOOD HORIZON: When we cave into food ruts, we let go of our ability to choose and experience. Habits are an indirect indicator that our daily living is on auto-pilot and we have released our power of choice. Our energy of expression encourages us to be expansive like the overarching sky – to look wider and broader, to explore and discover, to be adventurous. One of the ways we can do this is by shaking up our food routine and getting greater exposure to foods. Eating ethnic foods – foods we may not normally eat, whether Thai, Indian, Middle-Eastern, European, or Ethiopian, to name a few, is an effective way to experience an expanse of food. See what happens when you introduce some variety. It exposes you to an abundance of tradition and culture. It broadens not only your food horizon, but helps you to step out of the box of your everyday living.

SPECIFIC FOODS FOR TRUTH

SEA PLANTS: Sea plants such as nori, agar, dulse, hijiki, arame, and kelp, are not common foods for most people, but they have value for the throat area because they supply iodine and other minerals for our thyroid gland. When our thyroid gland is properly fueled, we can metabolize our food properly and feel in balance with our body weight. If you haven't tried sea plants before, try exploring all of their tastes and uses. For example, you can sprinkle dry dulse flakes on top of a salad or make a wrap with vegetables and sprouts using a sheet of nori.

SOUPS/SAUCES/JUICES: These foods are moistening and lubricating for the mouth and throat. They help quench our thirst or help us to sustain our bodies with a variety of nutrients. Adding a little sauce (like soy sauce or a light dressing) to a vegetable can help it to better mix within our mouths so that we can digest it fully. Eating soups can open up the throat area and create more ease in eating. Spooning in warm soup compared to taking bites of food may

help us to slow down and be more in the moment. And finally, juicing fruits and vegetables can extract the nutrients we need in a liquid base to nourish the body through the conduit of communication. On a symbolic level, the throat transforms the messages of the heart into the language of voice, words, song, and poetry. In a similar way with food, we bring together the elements of earth, water, and fire to create transformation - water and earth, fire and water, fire and earth. By eating foods like soups (earth-water elements fused together through fire), sauces (earth-water), and juices (water-earth), we encourage and honor our connection with the elemental, transformative nature of foods and our bodies that starts in the throat.

SOUPS/SAUCES/JUICES: Fruits tend to be high in water content, so they are the perfect food for the throat. Some of them make us pucker, like lemons and limes, which can be good for propelling us into action to say something. Others make us expansive because of their water content and sweet taste, like succulent watermelons, cucumber, cantaloupe, and grapes, which can help us to be more communicative when we feel withdrawn.





CHAPTER 6

FOODS FOR YOUR INSIGHT

Eating with Mindfulness

OVERVIEW

When we think about “seeing,” we might conjure up an image of our physical eyes which allow us to peer into the external world. However, there is another, less literal, interpretation of eyesight that involves “in-sight,” or the ability to gain perspective from within through the combination of our inner wisdom and vision. Our intuitive sense, often referred to as the “sixth sense”, is a culmination of our earthly experience combined with our senses and “gut feeling”. It moves us from the microcosm of our being into the macrocosm of all interconnectedness. If we harness our intuition effectively, it can guide our lives, helping us to make choices that serve us and others best. Sometimes we perceive our intuition outright through what we hear, see, and feel, and other times, we are imparted information we need to know through the conduit of our dreams or messages received during stillness and contemplation as brought forth in practices like meditation or mindfulness. If we are paying attention and are mindful, we will be able to connect our small and big selves using the bridge of intuition. When it comes to food and eating, many of us have lost sight of our inner wisdom about what to eat, how to eat, and how much to eat. By listening to the higher intuitive self, we realign with our true body and soul needs and are better equipped to make good, true, and beautiful choices. This part of us – our wise self – is our higher visionary self and uses the body organs of eyes, brain, and the coordination of the incredible network of hormones through the hypothalamus, pituitary and pineal glands, through which we form a constellation with concepts of discernment, mindfulness, imagination, symbolism, and self-realization.

PROMOTE HEALTHY INSIGHT THROUGH EATING

EAT WITH YOUR EYES – You may have heard the expression – “you eat with your eyes” – and, indeed, there is some truth to this statement as our eating process begins before we’ve even taken a bite of food. We begin the process of transformation in the body by first seeing the food – noticing its rainbow array of colors and the artistry of food arranged on the plate. This interaction feeds us – it sparks our brain to start sending signals to the rest of our physiology (primarily the gut) that we’ve got food coming. Therefore, use the wonderful sense of sight to connect to food at the grocery store and in the kitchen. See if you can sit at a meal and look at it intently before you dive into its goodness, taking in its healing colors.

EAT INTUITIVELY – We are all intuitive beings, but sometimes we put our intellect on overdrive when it comes to eating. Keep in mind that intuition is mainly a divine calling that is linked to our bodily experience. By tuning into our soulful needs through the vehicle of our intuitive voice, we will be in harmony with what both our body and soul require to resonate to their fullest. Listening to our intuitive voice about foods and eating requires practice. You may “feel” that you need to be eating more spinach. Or you may have a “hunch” that you need to get more protein by eating black beans. Honor your intuitive signals that come in through clairvoyance (insight through images), clairaudience (insight through sound), clairsentience (insight through touch or feeling), and what I like to call “clair-olfactance” (insight through smell) to bring your body and soul into alignment. The more you pay attention, the more intuitive hits you’ll receive!

KEEP THE BRAIN “PLASTIC” WITH CHANGE AND FLEXIBILITY – There is a new concept called “neuronal plasticity,” which refers to the ability



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Eating with Mindfulness

of the neurons in the brain to remain fluid and flexible, transmitting their messages with ease. As we become older, the brain becomes less “plastic” and more stagnant in routines and ruts. One of the ways to cultivate flexibility is to ensure that we are constantly “shaking things up” in our daily regimen. Instead of having the same foods every day, it is important to consider variety – in what you eat, how you eat, and even when you eat. It is also worthwhile to think about applying this concept to how you think about food. Many people get caught in the trap of eating one way all their lives – it becomes a doctrine or dogma, and it may end up becoming a form of narrow-mindedness or insensitivity. The goal for healthy brain aging is to be open to new thoughts about food and eating, and then use the power of discernment to cut through what doesn’t mesh with your intuition and let it go.

EAT TO SLEEP WELL – There is a “new” disorder that has emerged – it’s called “Nighttime Eating Syndrome”. When people have lots of extra time at night, they may settle into a routine of relaxing at home, watching television and eating snacks. These snacks may amount to a significant proportion of their daily intake – in some cases about 15% of the total calories can be eaten at night after dinner! Eating close to bedtime may result in disruptions in sleep patterns for some people. Not eating two to three hours before bedtime works well for most. If we eat right before we go to sleep, our brain may remain too active, keeping us unsettled throughout the night. On the other hand, having a light protein snack right before bedtime may help give some individuals with an imbalance a deeper, grounded quality of sleep. For restful dreams, curtail nighttime eating.

SPECIFIC FOODS FOR INSIGHT

HEALTHY FATS: Of course, the brain is an essential organ and we need to provide it with nutrition just like any other part of us. In fact, it has unique nutritional needs. Since about 60% of the brain is

fat, we can alter the composition of the brain by feeding it good, healthy, unsaturated omega-3 fats, like those you’d get from fish, nuts, seeds, and vegetables. Feeding the body and, ultimately, the brain with healthy fats will ensure that your neurotransmitters are flowing fluidly, and keep you in a good, positive mood. Studies have shown that people who have depression have lower amounts of omega-3 fats in their blood. Feast on fish and prevent yourself from “going nuts” by eating nuts!

BLUE-PURPLE BERRIES: Berries, particularly the dark blue-purplish kind, like blueberries, have been shown to help animals learn better and improve their memory. Researchers have shown that giving berries to aged animals (the equivalent of about ½ cup for humans) resulted in cognitive improvements. And if that weren’t interesting enough, what we now know is that berries aren’t just brain-wonder foods because they are potent antioxidants. Scientists have shown that the two berries, blueberries and strawberries, influence different types of learning and memory. They appear to be very specific both in function and where they end up localizing in the brain. Additionally, berries and purple grapes are good sources of the powerhouse antioxidant, resveratrol, which has been touted as a potent metabolic modulator. Think small, dark berries for breakfast in a smoothie (try them frozen if you can’t obtain fresh berries) or as part of a meal for adults to help slow down brain aging, and even for kids to help them learn at school. Fresh berries are a real treat as a snack in the afternoon when we feel mentally worn out or in the evening when we are looking for a pick me-up dessert after dinner.

SPICE IT UP!: If you look at some of the healing diets in the Mediterranean and in India, they use an abundance of spices like oregano, dill, tarragon, ginger, black peppercorns, rosemary, and turmeric, to name a few. Herbs and spices have been referred to as the “jewels of the plant kingdom” as they have a multitude of properties which make them desirable for adding zest and zing to a meal and



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for having anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer, and free-radical-quenching effects in the body. Indeed, spices are typically used in small amounts because of their potent effects on the palate. We may not need large amounts to see substantial impact. Many spices are not only tasty, but medicinal as well, specifically for reducing brain aging. One example is curry, which consists of curcumin, along with a number of other spices. Populations that eat more curry tend to have better scores on cognition tests. Also, curcumin, from the curry spice, has been shown to be a potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compound that reduces the buildup of a protein (beta-amyloid) found to be in greater concentrations in demented brains. Tap into your kitchen pharmacy of herbs and spices – try out different combinations for taste and for benefit! You can sprinkle spices on vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and meats, to name a few.

CHOCOLATE: Chocolate is one of the most powerful foods for the brain and offers its gift of insight – the cocoa polyphenols are protective to the brain matter and the cardiovascular system. Dark chocolate contains small amounts of caffeine which stimulates the brain and thinking, enabling us to focus on a task at hand better. It also contains antioxidants known as flavonoids which help to open up the blood vessels. We may even become more relaxed and lower our blood pressure as a result of this effect. Aside from its physiological effects, it can certainly alter our psychology, and most notably, our mood, as it contains several constituents that act as stimulants or that give us the comforting “I’m in love” feeling. Try having a small square of dark chocolate in the late afternoon to help your brain to revive from thinking all day long and to help your mood sink into one of relaxation and bliss!





CHAPTER 7

FOODS FOR YOUR SPIRIT

Eating with Connection

OVERVIEW

Of course, the body, emotions, and mind are all facets of who we are as human beings. However, the overarching aspect of what animates us into motion at a deep level is the life force energy that invigorates every cell in our body. Some people refer to this energy as cellular intelligence, chi, qi, prana, and some might contextualize this part of who we are as the “soul”. Ancient spiritual texts refer to this life force energy as what connects us to a greater, divine presence. Often, this force is perceived as “electricity” in the body, and captured through the conduit of the central nervous system network of interlacing nerves threading through the spinal column out to every square inch of the body. As individuals, we may think of ourselves as separate entities, and yet, there is a soul part of us that is not separate but integrated into all forms of life. Within the vast collective unconscious and conscious, we have commonalities as human beings. For example, in our daily lives, we are all linked to certain archetypes or symbols, such as what it means to be a “mother” or to be a “hero”. We also all connect through the experience of eating. Furthermore, these universal archetypes may come through our persona as the result of our relationship with food. As American businessman and author Stephen Covey has said, ‘We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey.’ Indeed, we are soul-full beings with the ability to believe, connect, and be clear on our life purpose. When we bridge together body and soul, we are empowered and enlightened in our living.

PROMOTE HEALTHY SPIRIT THROUGH EATING

CONNECT WITH LIFE THROUGH EATING: Many of us realize that eating is a physical act – our bodies harness energy from the food in order to move

around, be active, live life – but how many of us recognize the inherent spiritual aspects of eating? The act of eating is spiritual, or connects us to all of life. When we share a meal with friends, family, or co-workers, we are entering into a venue of connection. We connect through conversation, eating together, laughing together, and talking. There are actually many layers of interconnection that can occur within a meal besides relating to another human being. We would nourish not only our bodies but also our souls if we were able to see the cosmos on our plate – an energetic lineage – spanning from the seed, which was planted in a field and tended to by a caring farmer and workers, bathed in sunlight and moonlight, visited by a multitude of insects, to when, eventually, the seed transformed into a vegetable picked by someone’s loving hand. The vegetable made a hearty journey to ultimately make it to the store or farmer’s market. It connected with someone enough for it to be selected and bought. A chef or cook took great skill in preparing it into a dish, and days later, it has found its way to your plate. So when we are eating, we are not just eating a blip in time, savoring a present moment of goodness, but a whole past history of connection. We eat our connections and take in not only the physical energy of each one, but the non-physical energy as well. Therefore, it is very important to eat the energy you want to become! With each meal, take a couple of moments to reflect on the complexity of connections that you are about to take in. Give thanks or say a prayer for all of nature that went into the making of the foods – whether people, animals, or plants. By doing so, you acknowledge the interconnection of all the pieces that are involved in the lineage of that food. Imparting a blessing through prayer or a spoken intention will help to connect the food to your spirit, and even alter the food compounds to make it resonate on a more positive level.

BALANCE THE BODY AND SOUL THROUGH EATING: Eating nourishes the physical body, and it can also impact the soul. Create a practice around



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your eating events that encourages spirituality. For example, introducing a meditative practice or prayer will allow for your spiritual center, or soul, to open, serving as a conduit to the flow of universal energy and peace. Every meal is indeed a miracle. How we approach that miracle could serve as nourishment for the body and soul, just like the food constituents themselves. In addition to seeing eating as spiritual, be sure to balance this approach with recognizing the physical aspects of eating and its functional role. Putting together the body and the soul is the perfect combination for connecting to the energy of the earth and to the energy of the life force that animates us.

PURIFY THE BODY WITH PURE FOODS: The soul is concerned with purification, essentially releasing the physical body from debris so that there is a better connection with one's higher power or source. One of the ways to purify the body is to refrain from eating foods that have been contaminated with artificial ingredients or additives, such as artificial sweeteners, dyes, preservatives, and colorings. When we load ourselves up with these synthetic ingredients, our nervous systems (as well as the rest of our bodies) become toxic. We may develop neurological symptoms like headaches, hyperactivity and inability to focus on tasks. Organically grown food and free range animals are excellent counterparts to conventionally grown produce and caged animals, and will have a different resonance.

INCORPORATE GENTLE DETOX INTO YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE: You may have heard the word, "detox" used to refer to cleaning the body of toxins. Many of us are bombarded by environmental stresses such as pollution, unhealthy foods, and lack of activity. By making sure to do something every day to keep you "clean", you will keep your toxin load to a minimum, and thus, feel and function better. There are a number of things you can do to rid the body of toxins. One of the foods that is

great for sweeping toxins out of the body is fiber. Eating high-fiber foods like non-starchy vegetables, berries, and legumes are excellent ways to trap toxins in the gut and carry them out.

SPECIFIC FOODS FOR SPIRIT

SUNLIGHT: The healing power of the sun is immense. It is radiant and provides nourishment to all of life. Like the individual photons vibrating within the glorious sun rays, the soul resonates to the fine vibration of the source of universal light. Sunlight and soul energy can permeate our physical being and spark certain cell processes. Connecting with the sun's rays fills us with the nourishment of hope, love, and divine grace. It balances the body and the soul. Before eating, try "bathing" your food in sunlight. Allow your plateful of food to bask in the sun for a couple of minutes, allowing it to be invigorated with the high photonic energy of divine radiance. Additionally, sunlight is a catalyst for our bodies to make vitamin D (often referred to as the "sunshine vitamin"). We need vitamin D for multiple organ systems, including the central nervous system.

OXYGEN: Oxygen, extracted from breath (referred to as "chi" or "prana"), is the subtle substance we are always sipping in to keep our cells vibrant and flowing with life. We couldn't survive without it. Oxygen is the key component that the body uses to access the energy contained within bonds of glucose in a process called oxidative metabolism. We cannot effectively assimilate the nourishment of foods to feed our being unless we have the essential wiring in place to our soul. With oxygen, our being stays conscious, alive, and invigorated. Deep breathing and oxygenation therapies help to clear the body of toxins and to deliver to the body the raw material to burn food for energy. Breathe deeply when you eat to ensure that you are harnessing all energy within the food.



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LOVE: Ultimately, love alone nourishes us. It is different than food in that the more we allow it to feed us, the more it grows, enabling others to be fed. When we are ready to accept love fully and completely, without limits, we are liberated from having to ingest any food to feed our vibration. We can experience love in its many facets – love of self, of others, of nature, of planet, of our higher power. By practicing indulging on love in all its many rainbowed forms, we open ourselves to a connection that our bodies, hearts, and spirits crave most!





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