

Tips to Making Peace with Food & Your Body

For the Holidays

From *Conscious Eating, Conscious Living*

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1. Fuel yourself throughout the day. Underfeeding sets us up to make poor choices and to overeat. Some people find that having a small amount of protein with each meal and snack helps them maintain their energy and not overeat.
2. Plan ahead. Have tasty and nutritious foods available to you at all times so you won't be vulnerable to whatever catches your eye when you get hungry.
3. Choose exactly what you want to eat instead of reaching automatically. You will find it easier not to overeat if you are eating what you really want.
4. When you don't have a strong preference, choose what's healthier (the apple tart instead of the chocolate cake; whole wheat bread instead of white, a pear instead of ice cream).
5. Don't deprive yourself. If you feel deprived, you are likely to make up for it - and more - later.
6. Add nutrients whenever possible. Look for ways to add fruits and vegetables to foods: fruits to cereal, pancakes or salad; vegetables to eggs, pasta, salad or soup.
7. Slow down your eating and savor each bite; you will enjoy it more and be satisfied with less.
8. Pause while you're eating to check if you're still hungry.
9. Make sure you're not thirsty as we often mistake thirst for hunger.
10. Check if you're tired, not hungry. We tend to overeat when we're tired. Take a few slow deep breaths and relax. Give yourself permission to take a nap or go to bed early.
11. *Holidays/family meals:* If these have been stressful occasions in the past, plan ahead how you want to cope with your feelings. Name your feelings (sad, hurt, frustrated, anxious...) Use your breathing to calm you. Take a walk outside. Send yourself compassion. Imagine the stories you'll have to tell to your best friend.
12. *Buffets and parties:* You may find it helpful to eat a small healthy snack before you go. If you're not extremely hungry, you're less likely to be tempted by foods you'd rather avoid. Walk around the buffet first before putting anything on your plate and see what appeals to you. Either
 - a) choose those few that are special treats or most appeal to you
 - or
 - b) take small taste sizes of everything you want.You will find it easier not to overload your plate if you give yourself full permission to go back for 2nds (after taking a break to let your stomach register fullness). You will also find it easier not to overeat if you sit down away from the food and if you savor every bite. If you drink too much, it will be more difficult to eat consciously. Consider drinking water between alcoholic beverages and give yourself full permission to buy any special foods whenever you really want them so you don't have to eat them all now.

13. *Treats at work:* If you are surrounded by holiday treats every day at work, make a decision ahead of time how you want to deal with them. Determine to stay conscious - choosing only those you *really* want and that you will eat slowly (sitting down preferably!) and savor. This will be easier to accomplish if you have eaten a good breakfast and lunch and your blood sugar is even. It may be helpful to bring your own tasty healthy snacks as an alternative.

14. If you find it difficult to stop eating sweets, drink some water, eat a small amount of protein or vegetables, brush your teeth or use some mouthwash.

15. Don't beat yourself up. If you do eat to the point of uncomfortable fullness, try to learn from this experience. If you are eating to comfort yourself and nothing else will help, try to have compassion for the state you are in. Eat slowly enough to taste the food and experience it soothing you. You will feel calmed and the emotional eating experience will not turn into a binge.