



## Eating in The Moment: Slow Down!

by Phyllis LeFevre, Certified NLP Life and Wellness Coach, [phyllis@inspiremomentum.com](mailto:phyllis@inspiremomentum.com)

Studies have shown that people tend to gain weight when they eat out more often, and that they generally consume more fat, salt and calories when dining in a restaurant than they do when they've prepared a meal at home.

Fast Food restaurants have also wildly compressed the time spent at a meal: if the line isn't too long you can get in and out with your 1200 largely nutritionally empty calories in just a handful of minutes. And then, of course, there is the drive-through, where you can combine eating your fattening unhealthy meal with the stress of driving in traffic!

Yes, super-sized restaurant meals, take-out and fast food eating in the United States have clearly contributed to the epidemic of obesity in America, and if you're having problems losing weight -- or find yourself gaining weight -- it is worth considering what role restaurant, take-out and fast food plays in your diet.

But fast food, take-out and restaurant food are only part of the problem: the American culture of Fast Meals may be warping your entire approach to eating, whether in a restaurant or in your home.

Fast Meals are really an extension of the entire concept of automation that began in earnest with the industrial revolution and accelerated wildly in the 20th century. As a result of the fruits of automation, tasks that formerly took a substantial amount of time to complete became mechanized and therefore made more rapid.

In some areas -- the invention of the vacuum cleaner making cleaning a floor much quicker than using a broom -- these changes were probably beneficial.



When it comes to food preparation and eating, probably not-so-much.

Modern human society evolved from traditional hunter-gatherer and agrarian societies where the growth, acquisition and preparation of food was the central mission of the community.

Many members of these communities -- usually, but not exclusively, women within the village -- spent all day every day preparing and serving food. Most men were usually fully-employed hunting, cultivating or harvesting.

Meal-time was a community event and effectively a sacrament and shared meditative experience among families and tribes.

Technology upended all of this in an evolutionary heartbeat.

Now -- even within the home -- "food" is often little more than plastic-packaged products just waiting to be "nuked" for not even a handful of minutes in the microwave and consumed while doing one (or several) other things.

So how does a person combat this drift toward mechanized eating? Recently, many food writers and health commentators have begun talking about Mindful Eating. The term Mindful Eating covers a range of practices -- some of which are overtly meditative -- but more important than any other tip or strategy is this simple thought: slow down!

Nine practical tips for creating healthier, happier dining:

- Find time to make each meal important. Make meal-time a genuine, scheduled, part of your day. Block-out quiet time for each meal and make sure that the amount of time you allot -- at least 20-30 minutes per meal, ideally longer -- is of reasonable length.



- Do not eat in the car, period. If you are buying a meal take-out or at a drive-thru go somewhere to eat it: even if it's not your dining table, a park bench is better than eating in the car!
- Choose a proper physical space for your meal. When eating at home, eat your meal in a real dining area, not on a couch in front of the television, at the desk with your computer, or standing up at the counter where the microwave is located.
- Create a proper mental space for your meal. Make meals the focus of meal-times! Turn off televisions and radios. Get away from your computer and the internet. Turn your phone off!
- Understand that dining is inherently social. Eating alone can be a trigger for over-eating. It's nice to eat with others, and conversation inherently slows a meal down. Try to arrange it that as many of your meals as possible are with others.
- Make water a part of your diet. Whatever else you may be drinking, make sure to have water during your day. It is a good idea to drink a glass of water 20 minutes before your meals so you begin to feel full. This may decrease the amount you eat at your meal and water is a zero-calorie way to make a meal feel more filling.
- You are not a machine, and your meal is not simply fuel. Enjoy your food, enjoy how it tastes! Notice flavors and textures! Don't wolf your meal -- take smaller bites and enjoy every bite!
- Listen to your body. Be aware of when you begin to feel full -- say, 80% full -- and pause. Ask yourself, "am I still hungry?" Usually your sense of fullness and satisfaction will continue to increase for several minutes: you may actually be full and not know it!



- Eat real food. When eating at home, try to stay away from microwaveable foods and meals. Not only are they seriously nutrient-depleted -- and seriously packed with preservatives and other chemicals -- but the pure speed with which they can be "prepared" prevents any naturally human transition from whatever you were doing to meal-time. It's OK to have to spend a few minutes cooking: it's therapeutic and the smells and process are part of entering into a humane dining space.

While it might seem that all this focus on each meal would lead to more consumption, and even weight gain, quite the opposite is true: clearing away distractions and returning meal-time to its appropriately sacred place in your life will almost certainly result in you consuming fewer calories, eating far healthier foods with more nutrients -- and enjoying your meals a great deal more!

*Phyllis LeFevre is a certified NLP Life Coach and Wellness Practitioner based near Raleigh / Durham, North Carolina, who develops individualized programs for permanent lifestyle change. Her company, Inspire Momentum NLP, works with clients in a one-on-one setting designing customized coaching programs that will ensure success. You can contact her at (801) 244 8333 or [phyllis@inspiremomentum.com](mailto:phyllis@inspiremomentum.com)*