

GENEEN
ROTH



EATING GUIDELINES
ONLINE RETREAT

Part Six / Week Six:

***“The Fundamentals of
Eating, Living and Loving”***

Part Six / Week Six Summary

Presented by

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Moderated by

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“The Fundamentals of Eating, Living and Loving”

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INTRODUCTION

Geneen Roth: Welcome everyone. I'm so glad to be here with you. And really happy that so many of you sent questions this week. I loved reading every one of them. I hope that you will continue to write with your questions and comments and to let me know what is happening with you as a result of taking this Online Retreat. As Sil mentioned, we have two bonus sessions coming up – one in September and one in October. So from now until then, I'd love to hear how you're doing and anything that you want me to know.

NOTES:

Make sure that you are in a comfortable place where you won't be disturbed. A quiet place where you like being. A place where you can feel relaxed. And as you are settling in, I want to acknowledge that there are many, many people listening with us live right now, on the telephone, over the Internet, and that many more will be listening in when they download this session.

Once again become aware that you are not alone. That there is a community of like-hearted and like-spirited people who are using food as the doorway into their depths of self. So feel that right now: that you are not alone. What does it feel like to know that you are doing this holy, sacred work with so many other people, right in this moment?

Again I want you to pay attention to your own attention in this moment. Are you distracting yourself, doing something else? Are you emailing, on your Facebook page, making a list for yourself or doing anything else except allowing the luxury of being with yourself for these ninety minutes? Ask yourself if you can give this much to yourself, give this time to yourself.

*Become aware that
you are not alone.*

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GUIDED MEDITATION

Geneen: Before we do our orienting, grounding and centering practice, I want to explain why it’s so important. Most of us live in our mind and not our bodies. We call that a life and we don’t actually occupy the space, the physical location, that we have been given on this Earth. When we spend time at the beginning of each part of this Online Retreat, coming out of our minds by sensing our bodies and sensing our location in the room – feeling the chair we are sitting in, our feet on the floor, our breath – what we are doing is practicing the art of being in our bodies.

That practice is important because this body is the piece of the Universe that you were given. Until you start occupying and living in your body, it’s hard to tell when you are hungry, when you’ve had enough, and what your body wants, which is different from what your mind wants.

Most of the time, we are led around by our minds, in an ongoing argument. When the body is tired, the mind says, “No, keep pushing a little bit.” When the body wants something hot, the mind might say, “No, I really want some ice cream as a treat.” When the body wants something light, the mind might say, “But I want a big helping of mashed potatoes!” Unless we can pay attention to and begin to realize the loveliness and gifts of listening to the body, we will constantly be led around by and to some degree at war with our minds.

So coming into your body now, your amazing body that’s served you so well. Become aware of the room you’re sitting in, orientating yourself, looking up and down, and side to side. Let yourself land, really land, no matter what’s been going on today or even ten minutes before we started.

The way to land in your body – whether right now or anytime when you find yourself going round and round – is to just come back, look around and see where you are, notice your feet on the floor, move your hands, wiggle your toes, and feel the chair you’re sitting on, where the surfaces of your body touch the surfaces of the chair.

Now take some breaths. Put your right palm on top of your navel and your left palm on top of your right palm and feel your breath moving your belly in and out. Feel what connects you to your life and to this breath. Allow yourself to settle, relax and be here.

See if for one moment you can drop the story of what your day was like or who did you wrong or what you’re going to say to somebody the next time you see them. See if you can drop the past, drop the future. See what happens when you just allow yourself to be here, feeling your body, feeling your breath.

And if your eyes are closed, just slowly open your eyes and take a look around.

NOTES:

*Pay attention and listen
to your body.*

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EATING GUIDELINE QUESTIONS

Geneen: I want to start this session by answering some questions about the Guidelines.

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Question: From Carol on “eat what your body wants.”

I still am not able to tell what my body wants. I am going out to dinner tonight and I want a cocktail, a hamburger and a couple of French fries. I feel I should get a salad with protein because I know that is what my body should want. How can I tell the difference? I don't want a salad.

Geneen: This is a great question. I love this question because on the one hand, Carol is saying that what her body wants is a salad, and on the other hand, she is saying she can't tell what her body wants and she doesn't want a salad.

You can see how confusing this might be to Carol or anybody. All of these voices: “I'm going out to dinner tonight and I want a cocktail, a hamburger, and some French fries.” Who is that actually talking? If it's a couple of hours before hand, it's often difficult to tell what your body wants, unless you are in tune with your need for protein, fat or carbohydrates, or have a sense of what nourishes you. It's difficult to really know until you get hungry. And so it's very easy, as Carol says, to be in conflict with yourself. “I don't want a salad. My body wants a salad, but I don't know what I want.” What do you do?

Make-Shift Diets

The first thing is to realize that you are having a mind/body conflict. It's about being in your body versus letting your mind tell you what to do, leading you around. That's when the war starts. Carol doesn't actually know, because she is already having an argument with herself. In fact, two parts of her mind are arguing, and the body has not yet entered into it. All we know from this question is that there is a big conflict going on. There is a should and a shouldn't, a right and a wrong. “What I should eat is a salad, but what I want to eat is a cocktail, a hamburger and some French fries.” The body doesn't enter into it, which really does indicate a conflict in the mind.

Really ask the body what it wants. A body could want a hamburger, but how do you know if you are in the should/shouldn't/right/wrong and it's hours before you go out. How do you actually know? You don't. First, realize that you are in a mind meld conflict, and then second take some breaths and see what foods you are putting in the good category and what foods are in the bad category.

All of us do that, putting ourselves on make-shift diets. We become “good” by eating what we think we should eat. But we don't want to so we rebel and eat what we want to eat without actually knowing what the body wants. My answer to Carol is: become aware that this is going on in your mind, notice the foods that you are dividing right down the middle and see what foods your body wants.

*Do you eat what your
mind wants or what
your body wants?*

She says, “I think I should get a salad with protein because that's what I know my body should want.” What's not very clear is if that is what her body actually wants. Between a salad with protein or a cocktail, burger and fries, a decision has to be made. Do you eat what your mind wants or what your body wants?

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Make Your Body's Well-Being A Priority

NOTES:

It's a priority to put our bodies first. For most of our lives, many things have come before taking deep care of our bodies. Almost everything has come before that. Certainly compulsive eating is not a way to take deep care of our bodies. Although we began eating compulsively for exquisitely good reasons – as a way to survive, to take care of ourselves and to express what we didn't know how to express in any other way – if we're still doing it, our bodies and our well-being are not our priority. We are sacrificing them at the altar of satisfying our minds, of rebelling against our mothers or fathers, of getting even by using food, of eating for emotional reasons that have nothing to do with our bodies. If we are still eating compulsively, the truth is that we are continuing to sacrifice our emotional and spiritual well-being to satisfy needs that cannot be met with food.

In this instance, let's say that Carol's body wants a salad and protein, and her mind wants something else. What do you do? Who wins here? You have to make a decision about this before you get to the restaurant. You need to make a decision not about what you'll eat, but about what you value. Is it your well-being, is it your health, is it taking good care of your body? Or is it getting the thrill with whatever your mind wants in that moment?

If you are eat compulsively, you are sacrificing your emotional and spiritual well-being to satisfy needs that cannot be met with food.

You make that decision over and over again. But what do you really want? Is taking care of your body, your well-being really important to you? Or not? It might not be. You might be willing to feel the consequences, because getting that food in that moment might be that important to you. There is nothing wrong with that. Just know that it's up to you to make that decision.

The Benefits of Keeping Your Obsession With Food

Question: Here's one from Andrea:

I don't really know what I want! I feel like I must like my food obsession and my overweight body. It feels safe and comfortable. When I really think about it, it seems like I'm happy being unhappy. Very sick! It honestly feels true and I can't believe it! There is a part of me that is so strong and set on me not changing. I feel like I don't have the energy to challenge that part. So what am I doing? I keep slipping back to the numb, zombie like person ... the same old familiar way of being!

Geneen: I think that this is a fabulous question! Although this has been covered during the Online Retreat, I want to talk about this again as it seems to be coming up for quite a few people.

There is an unspoken, unseen, unconscious benefit of keeping the obsession around. If it didn't benefit us, if it didn't serve us, we wouldn't keep doing it. The very first step to unwinding your relationship with food is to see that you don't want to do it. I'm not saying this is true for everybody, or true for you all of the time, because if it was you wouldn't be listening now.

I always ask in an in-person workshop or retreat, how is your relationship with food helping you? It may not seem like it's helping you, but if you took a wild guess, imagine how it is helping you.

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Some of the ways might be: “I get to keep putting my life on hold until I’m at my natural weight.” “When I’m at this weight, people don’t expect a lot from me, and therefore I don’t have to take the chance of not meeting their expectations.” “When I’m at this weight, I don’t expect a lot from myself, so I don’t have to feel disappointed in myself.” “I can continue to believe that I’ll have time in the future to get to my natural weight and then everything will be great.” Those are just a few of the benefits. If you ask yourself to imagine, to take wild guesses on how your obsession with food is helping you, you’d find out.

NOTES:

When I first started working with my relationship with food, I began noticing that this was true for me in my own mind. I saw that when I dialogued with myself, I believed that I could not be at my natural weight and not be in a relationship at the same time.

*Imagine how your
obsession with food is
helping you.*

I was single. I had a history of being unavailable for myself by spending most of my time pursuing people who would not be good for me and trying to convince them to love me. That became my work and that became my project. I was going to show them how lovable I was. Because that became my main project, everything else fell to the side. The obsession was to be loved and to prove how lovable I was to this unavailable person who was never going to care for me, no matter what.

If I was spending all of my time doing that, then I couldn’t actually spend my time on myself, developing my own work. That was when I realized that I wanted to write and to start small groups on working with compulsive eating. The only way I knew how to stop continually throwing myself at unavailable and destructive people was to feel unattractive.

When I was thirty, forty, fifty pounds overweight, I felt so bad about myself and so unattractive that I wasn’t flinging myself hither and dither. I realized that when I was using my weight for that reason, which was really a good reason, there was a big benefit in doing that. In my thinking, before I untangled my relationship with food, the only way I could focus on my writing and experimenting in small groups with these Eating Guidelines was to keep all that weight on my body.

When I understood what the benefit was and that it didn’t have to be that way, I realized that I could actually decide to not get involved with anybody for a couple of years. That could be my decision. I could take the power away from my weight and give it back to myself. The truth is that I felt that my weight was expressing these things.

When I realized that I was giving my weight that kind of power, one of the first things I immediately did was to buy new jeans and a fabulous shirt so that I felt good at that weight, for myself. The whole thing was a fantasy that I was telling myself in my mind. I could feel attractive at that weight, but it didn’t mean that I should fling myself at unavailable people or anybody for that matter.

The second thing that happened was that I started losing weight, because I made a commitment to myself about my own mind. I didn’t need to use food to express something that I felt very strongly about. But until I saw the benefit of how food and weight were helping me, it was hard to let it go.

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So to Andrea, I'd say, do a dialogue and ask your weight what it is giving you, what it is protecting you from and what it is expressing for you. Most of us know. If you put thirty pounds of fat in a big wagon, it couldn't express anything. It doesn't say anything. It doesn't have a mind. It's you that is giving up that power. It's you that is expressing that, but you're not taking full ownership. So take that power back, and put it where it belongs.

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Eating for Memories and Associations

Question: Sherri has a question about the Guideline, “eat until you are satisfied.”

I've been incorporating the Eating Guidelines into my daily life since reading Women, Food and God. Though there are times when I find myself reverting back to old eating patterns, I am now aware that I am doing so. This is huge progress for me, because once I realize that I'm moving away from them, I am able to pull myself back. This awareness has been a true gift.

Weekends are still a particular challenge, primarily Saturday and Sunday breakfasts. When I was a child growing up, my father always made a large breakfast for me on weekend mornings. This was special, as the time he and I got to spend together was limited. One day, while he was away from home, he died suddenly and I never got to say goodbye.

As an adult, I find myself making huge weekend breakfasts for my husband and me. Though I focus on making the meals healthier, I certainly eat too much on most occasions and often feel stuffed afterwards. Since enrolling in the online retreat, I've been successful on a few occasions to eat a weekend breakfast only until I sense that my body is satisfied, but it is a real struggle. Do you have any suggestions on how to deal with this type of situation? I am learning a great deal during this Online Retreat. I feel certain that the Eating Guidelines will lead me out of the emotional eating maze.

Geneen: This is an extension of what we talked about in our last session: eating particular foods for the association with the food, for the memories they bring back. We often eat food because of who we were with when we tasted the food for the first time, when we might have been really happy.

Sherri is saying this, and more. Making a huge breakfast on the weekend is a way to bring her father back, a way to have her father there. She never got to say goodbye. There was never any closure. And by eating those big breakfasts on the weekends, she never has to say goodbye, because her Dad is there, with her. She recreates the situation and there comes that feeling of “my Dad and me” or “my Dad is here.”

There is such sadness in never getting to say goodbye, in not having that closure, and Dad dying when you're a child. Such grief, such sadness. Who wouldn't want to bring their Dad back?

For Sherri, it's important to have compassion for yourself. Compassion for the child who lost her Dad, for the grief, for the sadness and the loss. And know that if you want to bring your father back, you can do that without cooking big breakfasts and without hurting yourself in the process.

We often eat foods for the associations and for the memories that they hold.

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Sherri says that she has stopped when she is satisfied, but it's a real struggle. When she doesn't stop when satisfied, she is hurting herself. For all of us, we are hurting ourselves when we are satisfied and don't stop, because we become uncomfortable and some of us get miserable.

NOTES:

How can you bring your father alive without eating to bring him back? Sitting here right now, all of us can think about somebody who has died or who is not here. Just think about them and they are back. When you think about them, you evoke them, the sense of them. When you love someone, when you really love someone, that love is yours, that relationship is yours, no matter what happens. You've got that person bestowed in your heart.

If they have left and there is grief, unfelt grief because of a lack of closure from never had said goodbye, then one way to keep that going is to eat the big breakfast and feel bad afterwards to bring back the memory. You have the happy memory and also the hurt, the lack of closure, the grief all being recreated.

Dad comes back with the big breakfast, and when you hurt yourself by eating too much, you remember the hurt. Because after the big breakfast is over and after the evocation of the happy memory is over, then what happens? “My Dad isn't here now and I'm hurt again.” You are going through some level of grief again, but this time it's grief about having done something to your body in the memory of your Dad.

See the situation for what it is. Realize that of course you want to bring your Dad back. And you can in your heart. But it doesn't have to be in a way that also hurts you. You don't have to keep recreating the hurt as well.

Is There an Adult in the House?

Question: Another question from Susan about “eat what your body wants” and gluten:

Through the time we have spent in the Online Retreat, I have considered eating a non-gluten diet. I have a hunch that eating gluten is causing me to have more pain and flare ups with my arthritis. So I eliminated gluten from my diet. This is a radical change. But if I think of it as an act of loving kindness toward myself and my body, it is very doable. I just find that I might be starting to crave those things that I have eliminated. Any thoughts?

Eliminating foods that hurt your body is an act of loving kindness.

Geneen: Susan has hit the nail on the head.

If you eliminate certain foods because you are in touch with what your body wants and it's an act of loving kindness, that is different from saying, “I'm taking all the good stuff away and now I'm deprived.” And then it becomes a punishment: “I don't like this. Did I do something wrong to be punished like this? How come I can't have what I want?”

At the beginning of practicing this Guideline, you will go back and forth, between the understanding, the realization and that in-touchness that it's an act of loving kindness to not eat gluten, ice cream, sugar or whatever makes your body feel unwell, and wanting to eat it anyway.

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Of course you want to be kind to yourself, and then suddenly you might hear yourself saying, “But I want that toast, that cinnamon roll, that pizza. Hey, I feel deprived. How come?” At that point, you can keep yourself company. Notice that the kid has taken over. “I’m a victim, and I want it. I don’t care what it does. It tastes good and I still want it. I deserve it.”

NOTES:

Here is a radical example to bring home the point: Imagine your child is allergic to peanuts and you know eating them would create an anaphylactic shock reaction in their body. If your child says, “But I want the peanut butter; I don’t care if I’m allergic!” you as the adult would step in and say, “I’m so sorry. I know you feel deprived. Tell me all about it.” And when that child was done crying and complaining, you’d say, “What should we do? Are you hungry, do you actually want something to eat or is it something else you want right now?”

A friend of mine has an eight year old who came back from day camp for the first time and said: “I’d rather poke out my eyeballs with a knife then go back to day camp tomorrow.” My friend, his father, said, “Okay, the knives are in the second drawer. There is a really sharp one in there. Pick one.” Justin wasn’t expecting this reaction. These are great parents so I know that if he had made one step toward the knives, they would have intervened immediately.

*Are you really hungry,
or do you want
something else right now?*

This is about, “Okay, there is some wailing, some complaining going on. Is there an adult in the room?” My friends told me that Justin just stood there, wide-eyed, speechless, and turned around and went to his room. And that was that. There comes a time when those parts of ourselves need to know that there is an adult in the house, that there are limits, that there are boundaries, that there is compassion. My friend Dave knew that Justin wasn’t serious. They knew that was how he expresses himself. He just wanted to be emphatic about how much he didn’t like day camp. It was just that first day, and he has loved each day since.

Their daughter expresses herself in a different way. She told them what she didn’t like about it, they listened, and she cried about it. They sat with her, and they held her. They knew that with their son, they needed to do something different. His language was about, “I don’t like it and I’m complaining.” He tried to pull a fast one, and they stepped in as the adult, watching him very carefully, and said “No.” There was an adult home and sometimes that’s what it takes.

“I want that pastry!” You can say, “Okay, tell me about it. I know you feel deprived.” Or you can say, “Ah ha, I’ve heard this one a hundred times before. I understand that this isn’t easy for you, but this is the way it’s going to be.” Setting limits is also love.

Restrictors and Permitters and the Eating Guidelines

For restrictors, I would not recommend setting limits, because they are very good at depriving themselves. They feel in control when they deprive themselves – of everything, including food and their emotions. “If I can control my food, I can control the world.” Setting limits – the “stop when you’ve had enough” Eating Guideline – is when permitters get wolfish.

The “eat what you want” Guideline is sometimes difficult for restrictors as well as permitters, because restrictors are really good at eating what they believe is good

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for them. Ask a restrictor what they want and they'll tell you about the glycemic index in thirty foods but not about being in touch with what they really want. Permitters will reel off what their mind wants, but not usually what their body wants. There are different shades of the Guideline for restrictors and permitters.

NOTES:

Another question that has come up is: can you be both a restrictor and a permitter? The answer is, “Yes, but usually not at the same time.” A restrictor becomes a permitter when she binges, and a permitter becomes a restrictor when she diets or only eats the foods that she believes are good and not bad. Anytime there is good/bad/right/wrong/should/shouldn't, there is usually a restrictor or permitter around.

Eating, Living and Loving

Does that make sense Sil?

Sil: Yes, what we're learning in a deeper and deeper way is to trust our instincts, to trust that there isn't a hard and fast rule with restrictors and permitters.

Geneen: If there was a rule – and it isn't a rule – it would be: Listen to your body, listen to yourself, and when you get to know yourself more and more, you will see the difference between what your mind wants and what your body wants.

The Eating Guidelines are the fundamentals of eating, living and loving. Why? Because when you are listening to your body, eating what your body wants when it's hungry, stopping when it's had enough, eating with the intention of being in full view, and eating with enjoyment, gusto and pleasure, then you are also having so much more of your life, you are living in a different way. When you actually start following the Guidelines, you find out that you have a lot more time in your life, because food was taking up so much of it before. Initially, you focus on what your body is telling you, discovering what pleasure is. It takes time, practicing these Guidelines, to free up your time. It takes great effort to become effortless at anything.

When you actually practice the Eating Guidelines, you have more time for your life.

The Eating Guidelines also imply an interest in yourself. You want to find out what you're hungry for, and you're willing to listen to your body, willing to give yourself full attention, willing to put yourself in the center of your own life. That means something other than food, which means getting in touch with yourself in non-food ways every single day. As Rumi says, “having an appointment with yourself every day.” What does that mean?

Make Yourself the Center of Your Life

In *Woman Food and God*, I write about meditation or sitting quietly for ten minutes each day. Think about how many ten-minute segments you spend each day futzing around, doing things you don't have to do. Surfing the net, writing emails you don't really need to write. This could be ten minutes in the morning, soon after you wake up, sitting quietly, getting in touch with yourself. This signals to yourself that your well-being is more important than anything else. Your willingness to spend a few minutes every day with yourself signals that you're loyal to yourself, that you won't give up on yourself.

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I started sitting, mediating, in 1975, and I have gone through periods of not sitting. I notice that when I don't sit, in some way I feel that I've betrayed an essential part of myself. Betrayed that part that knows grounding, orienting and being in touch with myself accomplishes something for me. Not doing a task for somebody else, but just sitting for me, because I'm important. Putting me in the center of my own life is important.

NOTES:

When I don't sit, there is this niggling sense that I've not done right by myself that day. A sense that the day hasn't started even if it's four o'clock in the afternoon, because I've not pointed myself in the direction of what is most important, which is what is true, right here, right now.

Giving yourself the time to sit points you in the direction of what's important, what's true right now.

If you don't put yourself in the center of your own life, putting an oxygen mask on your own life first, then you are not really able to do good for other people. You are not being who you could be. You don't bring your full heart, your full spirit, your full self. It's as if you are not watering the plant of yourself. You are walking around withered, dry, not allowing yourself to bloom. You don't believe that by blooming, you shower that radiance on everyone you touch.

We are all walking transmitters of our beliefs. When you put your own self in the center of your life, you communicate that to other people.

Landing in Your Body

Another fundamental of living, and we've been talking about this throughout the Online Retreat, is sensing your body. Being aware that you're living in a body, sensing it many times a day. Becoming aware of your arms, hands, feet, toes, the room you are in. Doing a two-minute version of the orienting and landing-in-your-body practice.

I wanted to read about the Eating Guidelines from Chapter Thirteen, “Being Hot Fudge Sundaes,” in *Woman Food and God*:

The Eating Guidelines are liked nested Russian dolls; they are exactly what they appear to be and they are also worlds opening endless onto other worlds. It's possible, for instance, to interpret the Eat What Your Body Wants Guideline only as it relates to food. A noticeable progression will unfold; you might start off by eating everything in sight and then realize that everything in sight is a reaction, a rebellion to the unspoken rule that you are not allowed to have what you want. But when you tell yourself you can have what you want, the rule collapses – and with it, any reaction to it. You find yourself slowly discovering foods you and your body actually want. What foods energize you, awaken you, and sustain you. Once you realize that it's possible to feel good by not eating certain things and including others instead, the compulsion begins to fall away because you've found something better; getting your life back.

It's never been true, not anywhere at any time, that the value of a soul, of a human spirit, is dependent on a number on a scale. We are unrepeatable beings of light and space and water who need these physical vehicles to get around. When we start defining ourselves by that which can be measured or weighed, something deep within us rebels.

We don't want to eat hot fudge sundaes as much as we want our lives to be hot fudge sundaes. We want to come home to ourselves. We want to know wonder and delight and passion, and if instead we've given up on ourselves, if we've vacated our longings, if we've left possibility behind, we will feel an emptiness we can't name.

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And we will use food to fill that emptiness. That means actually allowing your life to be its fullest expression by using your relationship with food as the doorway, to use your relationship with food to take your life back, to be hot fudge sundaes.

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Nighttime Eating

Question: Susan has a question about nighttime eating:

I am rarely hungry for breakfast and you say we should eat when we are hungry. I thought that eating breakfast sets your whole day up for success. Is this a myth? Should I eat breakfast when not hungry?

Geneen: The reason this question is about nighttime eating is because those of us who eat a lot at night or in the middle of the night are rarely hungry when we get up in the morning.

Nighttime eating is a way to avoid the feelings that come up when day turns to night.

Nighttime is hard for many of us. The very same things that look bright and promising during the day have a whole different feeling in the night. There might be a sense of shadow and certainly there is literal darkness. The way that many of us handle the transition from day to night is to turn up the lights – bright lights, television, computer lights – to avoid feeling that it’s nighttime, slowing down time. The things that caught our attention during the day wane at night. There might be more feelings of loneliness or aloneness. We might feel really lost or really tired. We might feel we want contact. During the day we get to distract ourselves from that with all of the brightness and stimulation, in the light of day.

At nighttime, there is a different mood, a different feeling, and instead of being with that, moving into that, feeling that and seeing what that is, we eat. We eat to fill ourselves up. We eat because we don’t like the change from day to night. We eat because we want to get away from that difference in mood, from the darkness itself. And then we feel bad about eating. We don’t have to actually feel whatever it is we’re feeling, avoiding or not expressing. After we have eaten, we just feel that same old “bad” about ourselves. We don’t feel the difference between day and night and we don’t allow ourselves to be affected by the change, the darkness itself. We jack ourselves up by eating and then we push ourselves down by feeling bad.

I recommend that you become aware of what you feel when day becomes night, when it turns to dusk, gets darker and becomes night. Are you scared? Do you feel lonely? Are those monsters that as kids we used to get scared about in the dark coming out? Maybe they are just the monsters of boredom and loneliness. Maybe they are not monsters at all. As Rilke says: “those dragons that are waiting to see us once beautiful and brave.”

Become aware of day to night. Turn down the lights. Let yourself feel affected by the night. If it’s scary call a friend. Start slowly and see what it’s like. If you live where you can go outside for a few minutes at night without lights, see what happens. If you don’t, then just keep turning down the lights so that the transition from day to night is gradual, is easy. Know that nighttime eating is usually a result of wanting to stave off whatever nighttime brings up. The problem is that if you eat at night, it brings up another constellation of feelings. And then you feel bad about yourself.

PART SIX / WEEK SIX SUMMARY
“The Fundamentals of Eating, Living and Loving”

Finding Support for Yourself

NOTES:

This is another fundamental of eating, living and loving: Get support and get yourself a buddy. If you have joined our Facebook community (at www.facebook.com/geneenroth), you can ask for support and for a buddy. Having support is good and knowing you're not alone is good. Buddy support is not advice giving, but someone to listen to you and ask questions that take you deeper into yourself. I'd recommend that everyone have a buddy.

*Buddy support is listening,
not advice giving.*

Other ways of supporting yourself include listening to the six parts of this Online Retreat, downloading them, making sure you have a copy. Listen to it in the middle of the night, or just listen to the meditation so that you have something that relaxes you. That way you have something immediately that gives you something that you need, something that you want.

I want to answer the second part of Susan's question when she asks, "Should I eat when I'm not hungry?" I recommend that you pay attention to hunger and how it affects you. There are no hard and fast rules. I do not usually recommend that you eat when you're not hungry, but that's up to you.

The important thing all of the time is to tune into your body, listen to your body, see what it wants. Eat breakfast when you're not hungry and see what happens three hours later. Just keep paying attention. Are you not hungry for breakfast because you eat a lot at night? Only you know that.

CLOSING

Geneen: During these last few minutes. I want to tell you all how much I've loved being with you. How much joy it has given me to do this Online Retreat with you. And how much I have loved hearing from you. Don't stop. I want to keep supporting you in getting support and being kind to yourself and to those inner dragons and inner frog-ettes.

Thank you for choosing to spend your time here, for that beautiful heart that you carry in your chest, for that desire to know yourself and touch the depths of yourself. And as always, I want to send out the love, the healing and the kindness that has been generated by our being together during the past ninety minutes to all of the beings everywhere who need it.

I want to thank Jay and Sil for orchestrating and moderating. They'll be with us again when we do the bonus sessions. I want to say good night in the way we've been saying it as Jay opens the lines and we all say good night together.

Until we meet again, many blessings.