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Food Attitudes

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This is a jam-packed 10 page issue – just a warning in case you print it out!

What's Your Food Attitude?

By Adina Tapu, RD

Food is a fundamental need. It's also a key player in two major conflicting challenges today – world hunger and obesity. On the one hand, part of the world is starving – with little hope for a solid meal on most days. Then there's the United States. Here in the good 'ol USA the food related goal of the majority is to find innovative ways to trick ourselves into eating less.

We've got an overabundance of things that don't nourish or fulfill us and a lack of things that truly sustain us. Perhaps because of our hectic lives we've mistaken one for the other and strive in vain to get more of the useless and neglect our deepest needs.

At its core, the problem with obesity is *not* a lack of knowledge. Most people know the *basics* of good nutrition. It may be a bit of a "motivation" problem, but that's not the whole picture.

Perhaps it's an "attitude" problem. A whole mistaken outlook about food, eating, and lifestyle change. What's interesting is that it's a problem that seems to be virtually absent in very young children.

Most young children have a pretty good sense regarding food. They may not know the details about which foods are healthiest, but they've got a healthy attitude toward *eating*. They know when they're hungry and when they're not. Young kids will try *anything* to avoid cleaning their plates when they don't want to eat – when they are no longer hungry. And if they happen to indulge in extra cookies at Grandma's house the worst feeling they may experience is a tummy ache—not guilt.

Yet some of those same kids become overweight adults. They reach a point where they again have to fight not to eat – not because someone is forcing them to clean their plate, but because they can't stop eating on their own. What happened? But more importantly, how can someone learn to respond to food in a healthy way again?

It's not something that happens overnight. Like most things worth achieving, it takes effort. It takes commitment. It even takes practice.

So what is a healthy attitude toward food?

Points to Ponder for a Healthy Attitude Toward Food

By Adina Tapu, RD

1. **There is a difference** between Hunger, Appetite, and Craving. *Hunger* is the biological cue that we need to refuel. It's a grumbling tummy, an uncomfortable physical feeling that is normal to experience after a several hours without food. *Appetite* is a measure of your desire to eat. A good appetite is important—a desire to eat at meal time is healthy. *Craving* is very similar to appetite but it is more food specific. For instance you may crave salty things, an ice cream cone, or chocolate, but you may or may not be very hungry. The point is NOT to eliminate our appetites or never act on a craving, but simply to keep the difference in perspective. Take a moment to evaluate how keen your sense of hunger is. Do you know when you're hungry? Do you know when you're craving? Do you know when you've had enough to eat, when you are full? If you don't, try

the exercise in the next section to help you regain your sense of the differences between these three impulses.

2. **There is no “bad” food.** Really. You have certain health-related goals. The choices you make about what’s on your plate can help you reach those goals—or they can make it more difficult. It’s simple cause and effect. There is no room for guilt. Quit labeling delicious food as “sinful.”
 3. **If you don’t like it, then don’t eat it!**
 4. **If you love it, savor it!** Really and truly take the time to enjoy it and pay attention to this wonderful pleasure while you are partaking of it—instead of the TV or computer screen. Take the time to set the table and make meals a celebrated and mindful occasion. Your eyes, nose, and taste buds deserve to practice their sensing abilities =)
 5. **Eating should be enjoyable**—but pleasure is not the whole purpose of food. The main purpose of food is to nourish and strengthen the body. Don’t completely sacrifice pleasure for health. But you can’t ignore health for the sake of pleasure either. Find a balance that includes both.
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This Just In: Most Diets Don't Work

By Sally Squires

Tuesday, January 4, 2005; Page HE01

Before you make a New Year's resolution to join an organized diet program, consider this: A University of Pennsylvania study finds a high cost per pound lost and very limited evidence for long-term success of any of nine popular diet programs studied.

Oh, yes, and large proportions of people -- sometimes more than half -- drop out within months of beginning the programs.

If you want to achieve a healthier weight, "the first step is to try to do this on your own," said Thomas A. Wadden, director of the Weight and Eating Disorders Program at Penn and co-author of the study, which appears in this week's *Annals of Internal Medicine*. "If that doesn't work, then get assistance."

Backed in part by a grant from the National Institutes of Health, Wadden and Penn physician Adam Gilden Tsai reviewed 1,500 weight loss studies of adults and zeroed in on 10 commercial or self-help programs.

Using those studies, plus additional data supplied by the programs themselves, the team examined nine plans: Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, L.A. Weight Loss and eDiets.com; the self-help groups Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) and Overeaters Anonymous (OA); and three medically supervised commercial programs, Optifast, Health Management Resources and Medifast/Take Shape for Life.

"With the exception of one trial of Weight Watchers, the evidence to support the use of the major commercial and self-help weight loss programs is modest or nonexistent," the team concludes. "Controlled trials are needed to assess the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of these interventions."

Price is likely to put many of the programs beyond reach of those trying to achieve a healthy weight, the study found. The medically supervised programs, which also provided food, cost the most, ranging from \$840 to \$2,100 for three months, or "about \$50 per pound lost," Wadden said.

Jenny Craig cost \$1,249 for three months, including all daily food. Both Weight Watchers and L.A. Weight Loss cost about \$170 for three months, while Ediets.com was \$65, TOPS \$26 and OA had no charge.

While the study found little evidence to prove that most commercial or self-help weight loss programs work, here's what experts say can help you to achieve a healthier weight by doing it yourself in 2005:

Pace yourself. Sure, it's tempting to start changing all your habits at once, but Wadden and his colleagues have found that doing too much too soon can be a program for failure. In fact, behavioral studies suggest that new habits begun at the same time are also more likely to be abandoned at the same time. So it's best to spend the first two weeks getting some of your eating habits in order. "Then introduce exercise in the third or fourth week," Wadden said.

Keep records. Yes, you may feel like an accountant, but studies show that recording daily eating and exercise increases your chances of success. Susan Burke, vice president of nutrition services at eDiets.com, notes that participants who record the food they eat on their site fare much better with weight loss than those who sign up but fail to log on regularly. "Unless you use it, you're not going to lose it," she says.

Make big changes in small steps. To foster a sense of mastery over your new habits, begin with something you know you can do. Maybe you want to decrease calorie intake: Start with a level that isn't too onerous -- say, 1,800 calories per day this week, then drop to 1,600 daily next week and so on, until you reach the appropriate level for the weight loss you want to achieve.

Revel in your progress instead of obsessing about your long-term goal. "Focus on what you achieve," Wadden said. "So celebrate the 10 pounds lost, even if you need to lose 70 pounds. You can only feel miserable about the latter and, hopefully, somewhat proud of the former."

Be the turtle, not the hare. Plenty of weight loss programs and best-selling books promise quick success. But losing pounds too fast can raise the risk of gallstones, constipation, cold intolerance and hair loss. Plus, quick weight loss doesn't give you the chance to make the fundamental lifestyle changes necessary for long-term success. About half a pound to two pounds per week is considered a safe rate of weight loss. It takes a deficit of about 3,500 calories to lose a pound. But things don't always go according to plan: Hormonal fluctuations and water retention can sometimes slow the scale's decline even when you do everything right. One of the last contestants to be booted off "The Biggest Loser" reality television series lost two pounds in a week -- and she was working full time at losing weight.

Reward yourself. Most people forget to give themselves a good pat on the back for reaching an interim goal. Just make sure that reward isn't food. Think about renting a movie you've always wanted to see; go to a concert; buy a new CD; get a massage or new workout shoes or clothes.

Enlist support for your efforts. "Recognize that you need a supportive atmosphere to be successful with weight loss," said Karen Miller-Kovach, chief scientist for Weight Watchers. "So turn to co-workers, family or friends for help."

Share Your Tips *or ask questions about healthy nutrition and activity when Sally Squires hosts the Lean Plate Club online chat, from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. today, on www.washingtonpost.com. Can't join live? E-mail leanplateclub@washpost.com anytime. To learn more, and subscribe to our free e-newsletter, visit www.washingtonpost.com/leanplateclub.*

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Try This at Home

An Eating Exam Where Cheating is Allowed!

By Adina Tapu, RD

Pick a day and meal where you have time to set the table and eat undisturbed. Plan ahead to eat your favorite food(s). Make it a rule for this practice meal that there is NO LIMIT and NO GUILT at the end of the meal. Do NOT plan for portion control...do NOT plan to follow your diet—*unless* it is medically necessary, of course. *Obviously if you are taking insulin and must adjust your dose based on your meal—or if you are limited in the amount of carbs or sodium—talk to your doctor first!* Otherwise, this meal will be a FREEBIE to eat as you please. The only rule is that you take notes as you eat:

- 1) Before you start your meal rate your hunger on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being “Not hungry at all” to 10 being “So hungry I could eat a horse”) How hungry are you?
- 2) 5-10 minutes into your eating rate how full you feel. Rate your fullness on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being “It doesn’t feel like I’ve eaten a bite!” to 10 being “So full I think I’m gonna be sick!”)
- 3) Next rate how much you are enjoying this food (flavor, texture, etc) on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being “This food is *not* fit to eat” to 10 being “This is taste-bud heaven”)
- 4) Repeat the first three steps every 5 minutes or so until you stop eating. Remember you *don’t have to* stop at any time *unless you feel like it*. There is no wrong answer. Do this exercise as often as you are able—at least a few times each month. Consider what you learn.

* Credit for this practice exercise goes to the book “[Intuitive Eating](#)” by dietitians Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch. I’ve tweaked the exercise slightly for this newsletter, but if you want the full thing read their [book!](#) It has many helpful insights into improving your relationship with food and ending the diet roller coaster.

13 Reasons Why Diets Fail...

and how you can avoid this seemingly hopeless fate!

Whether you're a first time dieter or a veteran with carb, fat, and calorie counting badges of honor you know that successful weight loss is not an easy task to accomplish. *Maintaining* a weight loss is even harder! *Food* is necessary to your existence, but it may also be a comfort to you, a pleasure, or a way you relax or de-stress. *Food* is certainly a big part of social occasions. And of course, best of all...*food is fabulous*: gooey, crunchy, moist, salty, crispy, sweet, tangy, spicy, aromatic and delicious. The flavors and textures are Mmmm....Mmmmm...endless....

Changing something as fundamental to your life and close to your heart as the food you eat is a difficult task—doing so in a way that is sustainable *for the rest of your life* is an even greater feat! Most diets send well-meaning people into a cycle of deprivation and guilt. You get a list of “bad” foods to avoid and a list of “diet” foods to eat in abundance. And you're supposed to live under this diet dictatorship until you achieve ... what? Happiness? A perfect body? A 50 lb weight loss? Boredom?

Sure it's easy at first—everything is simple when your motivation is high and you've just started a diet. If you're desperate enough even a bowl of twigs and sawdust for breakfast will taste scrumptious and invigorating if it can take off 10 pounds in a week...right? But what about 3 months down the road? How about 6 months? 2 years? No doubt people lose weight on diets—almost any diet can lead to weight loss if you stick to it forever. But diets fail you miserably when it comes to long lasting results. There are numerous flaws shared by diets and the typical diet mentality. Below are the major reasons that dieters like you have probably failed in the past. They're really reasons why *diets have failed you!*

1. Diets Reduce Your Calories To Unmanageable Low Levels

There is *no way you can lose weight without reducing calories*—but most diets force you to eat *far to few calories*. This can cause you to lose muscle and may lower your metabolic rate.

2. Diets Foster a Temporary Mindset About Eating!

Eating is something you will have to do for the rest of your life. Yet few people look at a diet as something they will do for the rest of their lives—50, 60, 70 years after the first bite of the “allowed” foods. Diets by definition are temporary fixes—but you need something that will last. Not just a get-thin-quick diet that could be dangerous.

3. Most Diets Don't Deal With Lifestyle Changes!

Your “lifestyle” isn't just the foods you eat and the exercise you tolerate. Your lifestyle comprises *everything* you do and is influenced by your attitude and beliefs. Following a strict meal plan is not a lifestyle change anymore than switching to diet pop is a “lifestyle” change. A rigid, temporary diet doesn't help you make lasting changes. You need tools and skills that will last a lifetime!

4. Diets Make You Think About Food Constantly!

Whether you are following a diet or cheating on a diet, most diets teach one thing quite well: Think about food every free moment you've got! To make improvements in any area of life you'll have to focus on that area for a while. But when the focus ruins the improvement—something needs to change!

5. Diets Ruin Your Relationship to Food!

Diets turn tasty food into the enemy and pleasure into a sin. Don't let another diet ruin your ability to enjoy taste and pleasure.

6. Diets Foster Black and White Thinking!

Black and White thinking about "good" food vs. "bad" food is the road to failure. No food by itself is bad, evil, or inherently harmful unless you are deathly allergic to it. All foods can find a place in your life and no food should lead you to feel guilty for eating it. Let go of the "good" food vs. "bad" food trap!

7. Diets Short Circuit Your Normal Hunger and Fullness Response!

Diets are a self-imposed external structure—fine for some, but a nightmare for others. When you're listening to a prescription to tell you what, how much, and when to eat you easily lose sight of your body's normal hunger and fullness responses. You look at cravings as inherently evil and hunger as a dreaded beast that's ready to fatten you up! That's not an attitude that brings good results. How do you know when to eat, how much to eat, and when to stop? If you're not sure, then another diet will NOT help you.

8. Diets Don't Teach You How to Do It Yourself!

What happens when you've reached a happy weight? Most diets don't teach real world skills for decision-making, goal setting, behavior modification, and relapse avoidance. For a diet to work it's got to give you the tools to do it yourself eventually! Diets don't typically do this.

9. Diets Are Rarely Written By Nutrition Experts

Go to a large bookstore and count the number of diet books available. Then count the number of diet books *written* by an expert in the field of nutrition—not just a self-proclaimed "nutritionist" but someone with a *degree* in the field and proper credentials. You'll find very few compared to the books by unqualified writers. Why? Because the truth about weight loss doesn't sell very well. What sells are promises of fast results with little effort and no unhealthy consequences—such results don't exist. Would you entrust your medical needs to a college student who reads about medical school? Then don't trust your nutrition needs to a hobby nutritionist! Go to the expert—a registered dietitian.

10. Diets Are Stressful on the Body

You hear a lot about the stress of extra weight, but you hear little about the stress of weight loss. While there are many *serious* health problems that go with carrying extra fat weight—the process of dieting is also a stressor on the body. Emptying out fat cells and under-fueling your body also has consequences. I believe the benefits of weight loss *far* outweigh the risks, but the risks indicate you should get the process right the first time—so you don't have to yo-yo back and forth from

heavy to think to heavy to thin too often! If you've already done some yo-yo dieting, there is still hope for a final success, but choose your methods carefully.

11. Diets Can Lead to Depression!

One of the consequences of improper dieting is depression. The deprivation, the guilt, and the poor self-image that goes along with past failures—it's easy to want to quit. But there is hope for getting it right for good. Don't let past failures keep you from reaching your health dream.

12. Diets Create Unrealistic Expectations

No matter how much I warn my clients about being realistic—many still behave as though their original weight of 7 pounds 4 ounces is a good goal. It's good to dream big, but your body is only so moldable and if your only goal is a very rigid number on the scale—you might want to rethink your goal.

13. Diets Don't Offer Adequate Support & Accountability

I've heard it a number of times: "The diet was great, but then I got really busy and my family was having issues and I just couldn't stick to it!" Or "I tried it for a few weeks, but then I got bored and stopped following it." Do you have someone to support you, give you encouragement and keep you accountable? Diet books are written for the masses. Authors can't be there during your tough times nor can they give you support when you need it most. Find someone who CAN be there!

By Adina Tapu, RD

Introducing...

Eat Smart Nutrition's 3 Month Jump Start to Weight Loss:

Comprehensive Expertise & Support!

- In-depth 90-minute initial interview so everything will be tailored exactly to your needs.
- Metabolic Rate Testing to find out exactly how many calories *you* burn. Starvation is not allowed!
- Realistic meal plans that are easy to follow and allow you to eat the foods you enjoy.
- An in-depth approach to weight management that leaves you with skills you won't forget.
- Weekly visits with a Registered Dietitian--*the* recognized expert in nutrition, diets, and weight loss.
- Healthy Kitchen Makeover--your kitchen will be loaded with delicious and healthy foods.
- Individual Supermarket Tour--learn to read labels and choose the healthiest options.
- No fads or hype--you won't be bored eating grapefruit every breakfast: no foods off limits!
- Sessions that will get you thinking in new ways--instead of just dos and don'ts you'll learn new ways of looking at food and dealing with the obstacles that may come.
- Realistic goal setting and behavior modification--you will stay on track to get what you want.
- Support and Accountability provided through weekly visits and emails (anytime!) with your Registered Dietitian to keep you progressing toward your goals.
- 15 Private Sessions focused entirely on you!
- This comprehensive 3-month package of knowledge, skill building, accountability, and caring support to help you reach a healthier weight is valued at \$611--but yours for only \$387!