Eat.Q. Quick Tip & Exercise

A recent study in the *Journal of Psychological Science* found that eating foods in ritualized, or in a specific manner repeatedly, can significantly increase your enjoyment of it—even healthy foods. Think for a minute about the rituals you may already have. For example, this may be shaking a packet of sugar before putting it in your coffee or eating one side of a sandwich cookie and then the other. The good news is that when you enjoy food more, you tend to eat less. Remember that rituals are different from habits. Habits are something you do unconsciously. Rituals require you to do a specific sequence of actions with intention.

Exercise: Create at least one healthy ritual that improves your diet.

For example, one of my clients ate a green apple by peeling it with a paring knife, cutting the skin in one long spiral just like her mother used to do. Eating green apples in this way was very enjoyable to her.

Tips for Creating a New Food Ritual:

- **Time:** Eat at a specific time (in the afternoon, just before you leave for work, or mid-morning).
- **Place:** Think location, location, location. Choose a comfortable, specific spot to eat (your desk, a particular chair at the kitchen table, etc.)
- **Preparation:** Cutting, peeling, mixing food vs. separating it (e.g., cutting a sandwich diagonal vs. lengthwise). Notice how you like it prepared.
- **Method:** Try adding a strategy or method. For example, line up a row of dark chocolate candies on your desk and slowly eat them one by one. Or, it might be always saving the best food for last.
- **Serving:** Eat out of the same bowl or use the same utensils.
- **Food:** Choose the same snack, meal, or brand of food.
- **Gratitude:** Many people say a simple prayer or words of gratitude before they eat.

My Healthy Ritual for this Week: Commit to trying one healthy food ritual every day for one week. If you don't know what ritual to choose, ask yourself, what do you already do in a ritualized way? Is there a way you can adapt it to make it slightly healthier?