



## The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed

EPISODE #14

### TITLE: A Weight-Loss Secret? An 'Attitude of Gratitude' for Food

*If you often worry about the 'best' way to eat. Or you diet a lot or obsess about food and weight, you may be a Food Fretter—the Whole Person Integrative Eating® overeating style linked with overeating and overweight. The antidote? Replace the in-your-head Food Fretting overeating style with appreciating food--from your heart. Here's why. And how to bring an 'attitude of gratitude' to food.*

## TRANSCRIPT

Hello! Welcome to The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. TODAY'S TOPIC: The Healing Power of Appreciating Food...From the Heart

I'm Deborah Kesten—nutrition researcher and host of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed, and I'm on a mission: To give you the science-backed, weight-loss wisdom you need to eat less and weigh less. Without dieting.

In each episode, I'll translate cutting-edge weight-loss research into actions you can take that can make a real difference in your weight and well-being.

### LET'S GET STARTED!

In today's episode of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed, you'll discover the insights you need to eat with gratitude—which is 1 of 7 pillars of my Whole Person Integrative Eating program for eating less and weighing less. Without dieting. In other words, research that behavioral scientist Larry Scherwitz, PhD, and I did with more than 5200 people, revealed that cultivating the ability to appreciate food--from the heart--and to eat for pleasure with feel-good feelings, is the antidote to overcoming what Larry and I identified as the new-normal overeating style we all Food Fretting.

Again, I repeat, Food Fretting is a new-normal way of thinking about food and eating. It is one of 7 new-normal overeating styles Larry and I identified. And it is how most of us have learned to relate to food and eating in the last 50+ years. It is *not* how humankind related to food for millennia.

### Are You a Food Fretter?

Are you a food fretter? Here's what it looks like. Do you see yourself in any of the following examples of Food Fretting?

**Example #1 of Food Fretting.** "I was good today," you may think when you've managed to avoid unhealthful foods, stick to your diet, undereat, or eat what you believe is the "best" and healthiest food, or what you think you *should* eat.

**Example #2 of Food Fretting.** "When my food cravings become powerful and I eat foods that are 'bad,' I feel so guilty" is typical self-think for many food fretters.

**Example #3 of Food Fretting.** “She shouldn’t eat that chocolate cake. Doesn’t she have any willpower?” you might think as you watch someone eat what she ‘shouldn’t.’”

An obsession about food. Anxiety about the “best” way to eat. Counting calories. Dieting. Feeling gluttonous, bad, and guilty when you overeat. Food cravings. Judging others about their food choices. Feeling righteous when you eat what you think you *should*.

The Food Fretting overeating style is a pattern of thoughts, feelings, and food-related actions that have one thing in common: obsessing about food and eating. These complex and dynamic elements of Food Fretting may be a key reason overeaters are often filled with mostly negative thoughts and feelings about food and eating. And themselves.

Then there's this: Food Fretting "think" has become normal in today's food culture.

### **Food Fretting: A New Normal Overeating Style**

In other words, if you think the food fretter’s relationship to food, eating, dieting, and weight loss is normal—you’re right. In America, 75 percent of women have one or more of the 10 elements of food fretters, meaning that they have obsessive thoughts, feelings, or behaviors related to food or their bodies; 91 percent of college women have attempted to control their weight through dieting; 22 percent diet “often” or “always”; and half of 9 to 10-year-old girls are dieting.

The goal of food fretters, though, isn’t always weight loss. Rather, many simply have a preoccupation about the “best” way to eat, to the point of obsession. Elements of this new-normal overeating style have become so common that the term *orthorexia* has been coined to describe it. The word comes from the Greek *orthos*, “correct or right,” plus *orexis*, “appetite.”

The Food Fretting overeating style may include the concept of orthorexia, but it differs in that Food Fretting identifies a specific family of *obsessive* thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are linked to increased odds of overeating, overweight, and obesity. These thoughts, feelings, and behaviors include counting calories; feeling anxiety about the “best” way to eat; having food cravings; feeling gluttonous, bad, and guilty when overeating; dieting; judging others about what and how they eat; obsessing about food; and feeling righteous when you eat what you *should*.

Here’s the takeaway. All 10 Food Fretting thoughts and behaviors Larry and I identified--under the umbrella of obsessing about food--are *intimately interrelated with one another*. For instance, if food fretters judge others about what they eat, they are also likely to feel bad when they themselves overeat, diet, have food cravings, and so on.

The bottom line: The intricate network of food-fretting elements is strongly related to overeating and weight gain. But...if you reduce even a few food-fretting thoughts and behaviors Larry and I identified, you’re also likely to lessen other elements of the Food Fretting overeating style.

And doing this helps lower your desire to overeat and increases your odds of weight loss.

### **Food Fretting Rx: Cultivate an 'Attitude of Gratitude--From the Heart**

Here’s the light at the end of the food-fretting tunnel: My research on Whole Person Integrative Eating has revealed it’s possible to reduce obsessing about food, ongoing dieting, and other Food Fretting behaviors--and lessen odds of overeating and weight gain by replacing the new-normal, in-your-head, thought-filled relationship to food and eating with an appreciative, eating-from-your-heart, nourishing connection to food and to the extraordinary experience of eating.

I know this, because research participants in our study on Whole Person Integrative Eating lessened their Food Fretting "think" and in turn ate less and lost weight by taking the time to replace an in-your-head Food Fretting relationship to food and eating with the pleasure-filled, nourishing Whole Person Integrative Eating guideline: to be grateful for food.

Here is the Whole Person Integrative Eating (WPIE) antidote to the Food Fretting overeating style. It is the WPIE guideline for cultivating gratitude each time you eat.



**Food Fretting Rx:  
APPRECIATE FOOD**

**Be grateful for food and its origins...*from the heart.***

In a moment, I'm going to tell you some of the health benefits of eating with gratitude--in addition to upping the odds of eating less and weighing less. Without dieting. But first, I want to share a profound thought for you to consider. It's a spiritual truth that, if you keep it in mind, may help you infuse meals with heartfelt gratitude. I'm sharing this insight because it has helped me, personally, cultivate an attitude of gratitude when I eat.

Most of us are familiar with the phrase, "Food is fuel, the body is a machine."

This thinking--equating the body with a machine and food with fuel--emerged 100 years ago in 1924 during the age of industrialization. It was during this time that chemist Wilbur Olin Atwater translated scientific discoveries into food-is-fuel, body-is-a-machine nutrition advice.

Flash-forward to today. Based on breakthrough scientific discoveries in the 21st century, we now know that food is much more than calories and energy, and that the body is much more miraculous than a manmade machine.

Here is my vision of the relationship between food and our body for your consideration...

Plant-based food (fruit, veggies, whole grains, beans and peas, and nuts and seeds) contain the mystery of life. So, too, do animal-based foods (fish, poultry, meat, and dairy). And so, too, do we human beings. At the same time, plant-based food, animal-based food, and human beings all need the same elements to thrive, such as air, earth, light from the sun, and water.

Here's where the deep change in thinking about food and our body comes in: Thriving--and living--indeed life itself--depends on our becoming one with food and it with us. In other words, the relationship between food, eating, and the body is the mystery of life itself.

To me, this means our relationship with food is much more meaningful and profound than a fuel-machine link. Instead, I view food as nourishment--and life--in the deepest sense of the word. And this makes it second nature for me to appreciate the gift that is food.

Moving forward...

Right now, it's story time. I'm going to tell you a story--and then some science--about the centuries-old, profound role that gratitude plays in food and eating. Then I'll give you some step-by-step guidelines for HOW to replace Food Fretting with its antidote, the Whole Person Integrative Eating guideline: Be grateful for food and its origins--from the heart.

### **The Ancient Power of Thankfulness**

Here's an ancient story that illustrates the integral role that thankfulness for food has played over the centuries. It is a story told to me by Yogi master Nischala Devi. And it is a parable from India that suggests an appreciative heart empowers food to open its treasures to you—to the degree that you are willing to open your heart to the silent message in your meals.

Once there was a great man, a saint, who had a devout wife. Early in their married life, she asked what she could do solely for him. He said, "The only thing I want you to do is this: every time you serve me a

meal, also place a small bowl of water and a needle next to it.” She honored his request over the fifty years of their marriage, though she never saw him use either the water or needle.

Toward the end of his life, he asked his wife if he had ever done anything to upset her, even a small thing. “I’ve been placing a small bowl of water and a needle next to your plate throughout our marriage,” she said, “but I’ve never seen you use either. What’s their purpose?”

He explained that he had such a deep appreciation for the food—and for the devotion with which she prepared it—he didn’t want to waste a morsel. Should he drop even a single grain of rice on the table, he wanted to pick it up with the needle and wash it, so he could eat it and not waste it.

Such deeply felt thankfulness for food (and all other gifts bestowed by the Creator of the universe) is also at the core of the cosmology of Native American nations. For instance, harvest festivals begin and end with prayers of thankfulness for all foods and other elements of nature. Native Americans find themselves not only thankful for food; they’re also grateful for the origins of food and the forces that create it: Creator or Great Spirit, and the spirit forces or elements, of wind, thunder, lake, sun, moon, and the stars.

### “Other-Oriented” Gratitude and Your Heart

What makes thankfulness for our inter-beingness with food so powerful is the degree to which we may experience authentic, deep caring about food, from the heart. To care about, and appreciate food in such a way is inherently what Co-founder of Whole Person Integrative Eating, and behavioral scientist--and my husband--Larry Scherwitz, Ph.D., refers to as being “other-oriented.”

This means that instead of focusing on your own food-related concerns (think Food Fretting), you’re paying attention to the food before you, regarding and appreciating the mystery of life it contains and provides. In other words, you’re holding gratefulness in your heart for food and its origins rather than choosing foods solely because they’re good for the heart (or waistline or mood and so on). When you do this, you’re focusing on something other than yourself. And focusing on “other,” such as the food before you—instead of “self” and food concerns—may actually help your heart health.

Here’s why I say this.

Larry has discovered a powerful new risk factor for heart disease he calls “self-involvement,” measured by excessive use of the pronouns *I*, *me*, *my*, and *mine*. While many well-known lifestyle elements—such as diet, exercise, stress management, social support, and restorative sleep—play key roles in preventing--or, conversely, contributing to--heart disease, when Larry counted how often 600 men, in taped interviews, used the first-person pronouns—*I*, *me*, *my*, *mine*--to open-ended questions, the men who used the most self-references were the men who were more likely to develop heart disease.

His breakthrough findings highlight self-involvement as a possible underpinning of heart disease.

Why is this so? Apparently, self-involvement may increase the odds of an ongoing cascade of certain chemicals that profoundly affect heart health; as a matter of fact, these naturally occurring chemicals affect every system in the body, as well as our emotional, spiritual, and social well-being.

Conversely, this suggests that the health-*enhancing* phenomenon of other-awareness--including, of course, awareness of the food before you--may contribute to keeping your heart healthy and balance emotions.

This also suggests that eating with what Buddhists call “a gladdening-the-heart” consciousness, may mean you are doing more than simply appreciating food; you are turning a self-involved, isolated self—a heart apart—into a self that is filled with healing connection. As a matter of fact, intriguing research by the HeartMath Institute in Boulder Creek, California, supports this idea.

### Heart Intelligence and Your Health

Since 1991, the opposite of a self-involved heart—an appreciative, loving heart—has been the focus of research at HeartMath. Says founder Doc Lew Childre and executive consultant Howard Martin: “. . .

when heart intelligence (a term describing the concept that the heart is an intelligent system with the ability to balance our emotional and mental systems) is engaged [with positive emotions], it can lower blood pressure, improve nervous system and hormonal balance, facilitate brain function," and more.

As a matter of fact, HeartMath researchers have also discovered that the heart's magnetic field (the *magnetic* influence of electrical currents) *radiates outside the body* and can affect other people. This means that when your heart is filled with loving gratitude, those feelings affect your body's electromagnetic field, causing it to extend three or more feet from the body.

For me, such findings also bring up the possibility that a "heartfelt" electromagnetic field, infused with gratitude, may somehow be infused into the meal before you.

What else? Bringing an appreciative consciousness to meals also brings up the possibility that if you flavor your meals with other-oriented appreciation, spice them with heartfelt blessings, and infuse both yourself and the food before you with gratitude, you are choosing the Whole Person Integrative Eating antidote to Food Fretting, meaning, you are "Appreciating food and its origins—from the heart," instead of the in-your-head Food Fretting overeating style and its family members of dieting and obsessing about food and weight and the "best" way to eat.

In other words, when you cherish food and all aspects of the eating experience, you may also find that the healing, magical mystery of gratefulness will work through you and enhance physical and mental well-being. And--based on Larry's and my research on Whole Person Integrative Eating--it may also lead to eating less and weighing less. Without dieting. And there's this: For me, eating with an appreciative heart leads to enjoying and savoring my meals; actually, to delighting in the whole dining experience.

### **Attitudes of Gratitude: De-Food Fretting Strategies**

There's a lot you can do to overcome Food Fretting and food-related anxieties, self-recrimination, judgment, and guilt. And instead, enjoy your meals.

Here are 3 ideas for you to consider as a start to letting go of some new-normal Food Fretting 'think':

**#1. Stop dieting.** One consequence of ongoing dieting can be increased obsession about food, eating, and weight. As a matter of fact, more and more research is linking traditional dieting with increased risk of weight gain. And a well-known study of four popular diets showed that, over time, there was virtually no weight loss--regardless of the diet. You've heard it before: Diets don't work!

**#2. Don't count calories compulsively.** Traditional diets that ask you to restrict calories and to eat by the numbers (I call counting calories, fat grams, and so on, "eating by number") don't work for the long term. Counting calories by itself is not a problem; a compulsive and obsessive attitude about calories is.

Instead, consider this: Instead of staying lost in a maze of measurements, nutrients, and numbers, focus on fresh, whole foods (please see Episodes 9 and 10 for more about what to eat for weight loss and well-being), delicious flavors, the profound pleasure of eating, and the delight you take in dining with others. In other words, bring *heartfelt* appreciation to all aspects of the dining experience.

**#3. Change your perspective.** And consider this: from the perspective of the Whole Person Integrative Eating *dietary lifestyle*, food in itself is *not* "sinful," "good," "bad," "right," or "wrong"—unless you're projecting moral attributes onto it and onto yourself! Nor, in my opinion, is food something to be counted, feared, and analyzed.

In other words, I'm suggesting that, instead of viewing food through the lens of today's new normal of judgment, relate to it as an expression of the ancient meaning of the word *diet*, through the lens of Whole Person Integrative Eating: as a gift that can enhance your physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being each time you eat.

### **The Takeaway**

Here's the bottom line: Ultimately, the key to successfully overcoming the Food Fretting overeating style--and often being filled with obsessive, judgment-filled, Food Fretting thoughts about the "best" way to eat, dieting, calorie counting, and anxiety-related overeating--is to create a positive, pleasure-filled relationship to food and eating by giving food nonjudgmental, heartfelt attention.

Bringing an "appreciation consciousness" to the experience of food and eating, and 'gladdening the heart'--as Buddhists say--with gratitude each time you eat may help you replace Food Fretting with the experience of actually enjoying food . . . and reducing your odds of overeating and overweight.

To help you get started, here are some prayers and blessings you can say over food. Some are ancient blessings over food that may serve to transcend the cycle of Food Fretting and dieting and obsessing about food and weight by replacing Food Fretting with an attitude of gratitude.

### Your 'In-Action' Exercise

*A tip, step, or reflection that can contribute to your success.*

So you can reap the rewards of what you discover on each episode of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed, I close each episode with an '**In-Action**' Idea for you to try. This may be a **Quick-Tip** about how to implement the healing secret of food we just discussed; or a **Practical Step** you can take, such as ordering a size-down of your favorite coffee concoction. Or perhaps I'll suggest a **Self-Insight Exercise**, an internal-reflection that can lead you closer to achieving your food-related health goals.

I'll offer an In-Action Exercise at the end each episode that can contribute to **your transformation from today's, 'new-normal' way of eating—which leads to overeating and overweight—to Whole Person Integrative Eating—which I describe as your** scientifically sound, personal guide to eating less and weighing less. Without dieting.

Consider keeping a Healing Secrets of Food Revealed journal to write about your experience with each In-Action Exercise.

### YOUR IN-ACTION EXERCISE

#### PRACTICAL STEPS

Today's In-Action Practical Step is twofold:

#### **PRACTICAL STEP #1:**

#### **READ--AND CONSIDER--THE WPIE 'APPRECIATE FOOD' GUIDELINE**

Here is the Whole Person Integrative Eating (WPIE) antidote to the Food Fretting overeating style. It is the WPIE guideline for cultivating gratitude each time you eat.



#### **PRACTICAL STEP #2:**

#### **FOOD BLESSINGS**

## Appreciation Blessings

Over the centuries, heartfelt blessings, prayers, or simple moments of quiet contemplation have become humankind's ritualized ways of expressing gratitude for the life-sustaining nourishment food provides. These expressions of gratitude evolved as thanks not only for the measurable and visible but also for the invisible, immeasurable, alchemical, life-giving, and life-containing mystery inherent in food.

Opportunities to bless food can be found endlessly in everyday life. Whether you begin the day with a cup of coffee or a bowl of whole-grain cereal; eat lasagna warmed by a microwave oven at work; or snack on an apple or your favorite ice cream--each time you're around food, you have the opportunity to appreciate it.

*To begin...*

Even if it's for a nanosecond, let go of worries, thoughts, plans, and so on. Then, inhaling deeply and exhaling slowly, invoke a feeling of heartfelt regard for your food and say a blessing. Here are some options:

### **SHOOT AN ARROW PRAYER.**

If you must eat quickly because of time constraints, consider shooting a prayer of gratitude at your food with the simple Native American Seneca greeting, "Thank you for being."

### **ZEN BLESSING FROM THICH NHAT HAHN.**

In this plate of food, I see the entire universe supporting my existence.

### **FROM SOUL FOOD RESTAURANTEUR PAMELA STROBEL.**

We are thankful for the triumph of soul food, "black folk cooking." Spiced with spirit and served from the heart, it transforms body and soul and helps spirit to soar.

### **FREE AUDIO: MINDFULNESS EATING.**

Here's another option: Please visit [HealingSecretsPodcast.com](http://HealingSecretsPodcast.com), where you'll find Episode 13, "Mindfulness Eating' in Action: The WPIE Guided Meal Meditation." Then listen to the free audio I created for you, which guides you through eating with gratitude--and all the other elements of my Whole Person Integrative Eating program that lead to eating less and weighing less. Without dieting.

### **TO ACCESS THE AUDIO MEDITATION**

[Open the TRANSCRIPT](#), [ARTICLE](#), or [IN-ACTION CTAs for EPISODE 13](#).

### **Thank you...**

If you would like a summary of today's In-Action Exercise, please visit [HealingSecretsPodcast.com](http://HealingSecretsPodcast.com). Then look for the yellow light bulb next to the "In-Action" CTA. At [HealingSecretsPodcast.com](http://HealingSecretsPodcast.com), you can also listen to this episode again, and read the transcript and my Article about the WPIE Mindfulness Meal Meditation. And, please consider joining The Healing Secrets Podcast Community—where I'm looking forward to meeting you.

I want to thank you for joining me today on The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. With each show, I'll share step-by-step, science-backed insights you need to nourish 'all of you' – body, mind, soul, and social well-being – each time you eat. So you can thrive.

I'm Deborah Kesten, host of The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed.

Until next week, BE NOURISHED.

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*Disclaimer: This transcript is for informational purposes only. This transcript is not intended to be a substitute for professional health or weight loss advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your health professional or another qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding your condition or well-being.*