



## The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed

EPISODE #16

### TITLE: Mealtime Emotions and Your Weight

*Whether appealing or appalling, pioneering research on the Whole Person Integrative Eating® dietary lifestyle reveals that both the psychological and aesthetic atmospheres while dining, influence your emotions and in turn your weight and well-being. Here's the research behind the newly discovered overeating style Unappetizing Atmosphere--and its link to mealtime emotions and weight.*

### TRANSCRIPT

Hello! Welcome to The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed. TODAY'S TOPIC: The Weight-Loss Power of dining in an Amiable Ambiance.

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!

You may find today's topic surprising; to discover that both the psychological and aesthetic atmospheres you dine in may influence your emotions and in turn how much you eat, food metabolism, and your weight and well-being. As a matter of fact, behavioral scientist--and my husband--Larry Scherwitz, PhD, and I, were super-surprised when we identified the new-normal overeating style we call Unappetizing Atmosphere--and its link to overeating and overweight.

Today we're discussing a pioneering finding: the influence that *unpleasant* psychological and aesthetic surroundings, when you eat, have on what I call your "mealtime emotions" and in turn your weight. Then we'll delve into the antidote to the Unpleasant Atmosphere overeating style--which is one of the pillars of Larry's and my science-backed Whole Person Integrative Eating program. Specifically, we'll discuss how to craft an Amiable Ambiance--which ups your odds of eating less and weighing less. Without dieting.

#### An Amiable-Ambiance Food Fable

Let's start with a very personal amiable-ambiance food fable. This is a very special food fable—a story of psychologically and aesthetically flavored fare that Larry and I experienced one evening in a snow-laden village high in the Swiss Alps.

It's early on a frosty wintry evening. Larry and I are sitting in a restaurant in Mürren, Switzerland, relishing the respite from the icy chill of the snowy winter landscape outside. We are vacationing, taking a break from the reversing-heart-disease research--based on the Lifestyle Medicine work of Dr. Dean Ornish--that Larry and I have been doing with heart patients at medical centers in both Germany and Holland. Scanning the menu, we're feeling as if we're perched on top of the world in a winter wonderland. Because

of the locale and season, we're feeling a subtle sense of withdrawal from the world; it is a time of turning inward.

To get to this Swiss resort town, we took a slow, squeaky tram up the side of a steep, snowy mountain. Because Mürren is so high up and hard to reach, there are no cars here. Instead, the busyness of everyday life is replaced with a special sense of solitude and serenity—and in winter, add the opaque, flat, silent quality that comes with snow.

With such winter-inspired feelings in our hearts, we scanned some unforgettable international meals—Swiss, French, Italian dishes—as the powerful scent of a pungent cheese fondue wafted past our table. Mixed-veggie salads and salad with shrimp. Vegetarian strudel with hollandaise sauce. Chicken in blueberry sauce with rice and carrots (a hard-to-find dish in this region of Wiener schnitzel and beef). Veal with mushroom sauce. Or lamb as a main course.

The menu was also resplendent with dessert options—from a blackberry crepe and fresh fruit to artisan cheeses and sorbet. An abundance of some local—but mostly French—wines provided a nice option as an accompaniment to the delightful dishes.

To be truthful, we don't remember much about what we ate that first night in Mürren. But we do recall—vividly—the feelings, mood, and atmosphere that flavored our dining experience: the soothing serenity of hushed conversation, the cozy comfort of being surrounded by steamed-up windows, the flicker of candlelight on each table, the soothing influence of the scents emanating from the kitchen, and the welcoming warmth of the food we ate. Blended together, all these mood-enhancing ingredients created a particular internal ambiance in both heart and soul as we ate—one that provided a perfect antidote to the icy cold and utter blackness of the moonless winter night that waited for us outside.

Our utterly delightful dining experience in Mürren, Switzerland, demonstrates what it's like to eat in pleasant—exceptionally pleasant—psychological and aesthetic surroundings. In other words, it illustrates what it's like to dine in an amiable ambiance—when both your *internal* emotions and the *external* atmosphere are stress free, balanced, and affable.

### **Meet 'Unappetizing Atmosphere,' a WPIE Overeating Style**

Here's the other side of Larry's and my exceptionally delightful dining experience in Switzerland. What I mean is: Eating while enveloped in positive emotions and pleasant surroundings is the opposite of the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style Larry and I identified that leads to overeating, overweight, and obesity.

In this episode of *The Healing Secrets of Food Revealed*, we'll focus on the psychological and physical aesthetics of your food-and-eating life: such as the atmosphere in your home, in restaurants, and at drive-through restaurants. And we'll also look at the *quality* of companionship when you dine with family, friends, and coworkers—or by yourself.

And we'll also take a close look at state-of-the-art studies about the surprising—but powerful—influence the atmosphere in which you eat has on your weight, mind and body. Then we'll do a deep-dive into steps you can take to turn this overeating style into the Whole Person Integrative Eating practice of eating in a positive *psychological* atmosphere and in pleasant *aesthetic* surroundings.

### **From Unappetizing Atmosphere to Amiable Ambiance**

To begin, let me tell you about Alison, who turned a lifetime struggle with overeating and obesity into a Whole Person Integrative Eating relationship to food that enabled her to attain and sustain weight loss.

I am especially reminded of Alison now because after she identified her overeating styles with our "What's Your Overeating Style? Self-Assessment Quiz," she decided the first overeating style she wanted to turn around was Unappetizing Atmosphere.

Her motivation? She knew that spending endless hours sitting in her easy chair in her living room while working at her computer and eating takeout food was a key contributor to her overeating and weight. Not only would an appetizing, pleasing place to eat get her up and out of her chair, it would help her be conscious of her food choices.

After choosing the nook in her home that could serve as her “eating oasis,” placemats and plates she found delightful, came next. In other words, Alison launched her WPIE dietary lifestyle by creating an amiable ambiance in which to eat. For her, it was a relatively easy—but important for her—overeating style to overcome—with an solution that brought her instant joy.

A brief aside... You can find out more about how Alison overcame overeating and overweight, starting with an amiable ambiance, in the research paper Larry and I wrote, published in the medical journal, *Integrative Medicine: A Clinician's Journal*.

## Psychological and Aesthetic Considerations

Our research on the overeating styles and their antidote, the Whole Person Integrative Eating dietary lifestyle, suggests that

So you'll have a better understanding about how both the *psychological* and the *aesthetic* atmospheres in which you dine hold the power to influence your weight and well-being, here's a little more intel about what I mean by *psychological* and *aesthetic atmospheres*:

**Pleasing atmospheres.** Have you ever eaten in an especially pleasant place, surrounded by supportive people, convivial conversation, and beautiful accoutrements? Perhaps friends took you to a favorite restaurant for your birthday; because they had organized the meal to celebrate you, the evening crackled with joy, comradery, and laughter.

In the example of this special birthday party, your *internal* thoughts and feelings while you eat—likely joyous and happy—determine the psychological atmosphere, while the *external atmosphere* is celebratory and is a source of pleasure. The milieu of your favorite restaurant has an agreeable effect on your psychological state as you and your friends chat over a delicious meal. In response, your heart is open and your soul is singing.

**Unpleasant PSYCHOLOGICAL ambiance.** But it's possible your internal psychological state can also be negative, stress-filled, and unpleasant (please note: the definition I use for *stress* is “perceived threat”). Have you ever eaten while feeling stressed, frustrated, depressed, or anxious? Or during a disagreement with a family member? Or while cooks behind the counter were arguing? Or while honking at the driver in front of you during rush hour? Or while watching a horror movie or murder mystery on TV? If so, you've had the experience of eating in an unpleasant psychological atmosphere. The surroundings were so hectic or unpleasant that they affected your mind or mental processes in some way—either consciously (when you're arguing with a colleague) or unconsciously (you might not be aware of the impact a horror movie is having on your psyche or digestive process).

**Unpleasant AESTHETIC ambiance.** The other key component of the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style is the *external* aesthetic that surrounds you when you eat. For instance... Is the place in which you're dining flooded with overhead fluorescent light and loud music? Are you sitting on a hard plastic bench, eating off damp paper plates? Or perhaps you're eating on the run, grabbing a sandwich from the convenience store as you fill your car with gasoline? These are examples of aesthetically unpleasant surroundings.

**Pleasing surroundings.** As a contrast, envision a place with an atmosphere that's agreeable to you. Perhaps, when you visit the home of a friend, you're greeted by the aromas of freshly prepared food coming from the kitchen: food your friend has made just for you. Perhaps you take a break from work at your favorite local café to enjoy the brew that the barista makes for you personally. Or soft candlelight makes you aware of a wooden dining table's lovely patina, peeking out from pleasing placemats.

Whether they're appealing or appalling, both the *internal* psychological mood and the *external* physical atmosphere that surround you when you eat may influence how much you eat and the way in which you metabolize food—and in turn your weight and well-being.

Here's more about this newly discovered, new-normal overeating style. Then I'll tell you about some other fascinating studies that support the link between mealtime emotions, weight, and your physical and mental well-being.

### **Mealtime Emotions and Your Weight**

When Larry and I took a closer look at the results from the more than 5,200 people who took our Whole Person Integrative Eating online course, not only did we discover the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style, we identified 7 unique elements of the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style. They're especially distinctive because they describe both the external *physical* atmosphere you dine in, but also the *emotional* environment surrounding you when you eat. And we also discovered that both the physical and emotional environment work together either to increase or decrease your odds of overeating and being overweight.

Here are the 7 positive and negative elements of this overeating style. The positive include preparing a meal or eating in a (1) pleasing, (2) serene, (3) fun, (4) calm, (5) and relaxing atmosphere; while negative attributes involve frequently preparing food and eating it in a (6) hectic (7) and tense environment.

The bottom line: When people change from eating in an Unappetizing Atmosphere frame of mind to eating while filled with pleasant emotions in an amiable ambiance, it can help them reduce both overeating and weight. And it's possible to achieve such success by learning and practicing the Whole Person Integrative Eating dietary lifestyle.

Such findings suggest that the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style, contrasted by its WPIE antidote, eating in an amiable ambiance—such as the dining experience Larry and I had in Switzerland that I told you about earlier—tells us that while food technology and what, how, and where we eat may have changed over the years, the emotions and kinds of surroundings we need to nourish our soul have not changed.

Speaking of which...

What happens to your mind and body when the atmosphere in which you eat reflects the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style—in that it is an environment that is jarring to the psyche? When both the *psychological* and the *aesthetic* surroundings aren't just unwelcoming and unpleasant but perhaps overtly hostile?

An unusual study done just after World War II offers insights.

### **Hostile Ingredients**

On June 16, 1951, the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* published a study that couldn't be done today. Not only were children involved, but the conditions were so health threatening—both emotionally and physically—that a modern-day review board would never approve the study design. In 1948 British nutritionist Elsie M. Widdowson was working at orphanages in Germany, where thousands of children had lost their families in World War II. It was a time of extreme trauma for the orphans, and their suffering was exacerbated by food shortages and rationing.

While working at two orphanages, Widdowson was able to observe and record an extraordinary situation that evolved. Her one-year study started when she decided to monitor and measure the impact of additional servings of food on the children's weight and height. Would those who received extra food gain more weight than those who received rations only? Would they grow taller than children who ate less? To find out, during the first six months, Widdowson gave children at both orphanages equal food portions; during the second six-month period she fed children at one orphanage larger portions of bread, jam, and

orange juice. Throughout the twelve months of the study, she weighed and measured the height of the children every ten days.

When she looked at the height and weight charts, Widdowson was perplexed. During the first six months, when everyone received equal portions, children at one orphanage had gained a lot more weight and had grown much more than children at the other orphanage. Things became even more confounding during the second six-month period, when the children who had been fed *more* food gained *less* weight and height than the others.

Widdowson pondered whether it was possible for children to thrive—or not—regardless of the quantity of food they ate. But when she scrutinized the **atmosphere** in both orphanages, she got an unexpected explanation for the seemingly contradictory results: Frau Schwarz. The children who had failed to gain weight and grow had been overseen by a strict disciplinarian who chose mealtime to publicly ridicule and rebuke some of them. This explained the difference. Here's what Widdowson writes about this: "By the time [Frau Schwarz] had finished, all the children would be in a state of considerable agitation, and several of them might be in tears." Here's a postscript: When Frau Schwarz supervised another wing of the orphanage, the same dynamic occurred. Children who were upset and agitated during meals failed to thrive.

### **The Implications**

Consider if you can relate the implications of this disheartening study... Have you ever felt hungry, then lost your appetite because you were upset? Or did your food "sit like a lump" because you'd eaten while agitated? Perhaps you've eaten to stuff down feelings (as some Emotional Eaters do).

The idea that your psychological state can influence digestion is now so familiar that it's easy to lose sight of how amazing Widdowson's findings were considered. But amazing they are. The discovery that children's' psychological state when they eat can be so powerful that it can actually determine whether they gain weight, grow, and thrive is remarkable.

Such findings lead to the question of how our internal thoughts and feelings and the external environment influence the way we metabolize food and in turn our weight and health. Some scientists have explored the role that your emotions and eating environment can play on the metabolism of the food you eat. What they found is quite amazing.

### **Discovering the Stress/Poor Digestion Link**

One of the most remarkable stories of how emotions can affect digestion starts in 1822--more than 200 years ago--on Mackinac Island in Michigan, when an army surgeon named William Beaumont treated 18-year-old French Canadian fur trapper, Alexis St. Martin, for an accidental gunshot wound to his stomach. Shot at close range, St. Martin was so seriously injured that Beaumont didn't expect him to survive. Not only did St. Martin live but the major wound healed, except for a small opening in his stomach.

At the time, little was known about the process of digestion; it was a mystery discussed in the medical community in Europe, especially France. Ignorant of the debate that raged in the medical community, but intrigued by the puzzle of digestion, Beaumont turned St. Martin's mishap into groundbreaking observational studies: over a period of 10 years, during which time he performed about 200 experiments, he became the first medical scientist to observe and carefully record a human being's digestive process.

Here's one of Beaumont's documented discoveries: He was the first to show that digestion actually slowed down when someone was upset. How did he discover this? Because Beaumont's observational studies were time-consuming and difficult—unpleasant and difficult to endure—St. Martin would become irritated. For instance, the only way Beaumont could observe St. Martin's digestion was to place food via a silk string into the opening in St. Martin's stomach and then remove the string to observe any changes. And it was during one of these experiments that Beaumont observed that the food wasn't digested as well when St. Martin was upset.

Since Beaumont's pioneering observations, science has made great strides in decoding the emotions-and-digestion puzzle—what behavioral scientists today might describe as the mind-body connection. As a matter of fact, they've answered the question, *Why does it matter if you eat while stressed or when you're experiencing unpleasant emotions* (which was what happened to the children in Widdowson's experiment who failed to prosper)?

Here's why eating in a while stressed matters to your weight and well-being.

Though there are many definitions of stress, I'm defining it as a perceived threat to either physical or emotional well-being. When you eat while stressed, your brain releases a torrent of sometimes-contradictory hormones (chemical messengers) that put your digestive system in disarray. For instance, to give you strength for fight or flight in response to a perceived threat, your body may manufacture the fat-friendly hormone cortisol or CRH (corticotrophin-releasing hormone), which in turn produces energy-giving adrenaline.

CRH can also suppress your appetite (which is what seems to have happened to Widdowson's upset orphans), or it may have the opposite impact: it may produce steroids (organic fat-soluble compounds) that can make you hungry—and prompt you to overeat calorie-dense foods such as cookies, cake, or potato chips. In other words, whether the source is internal or external, **an unpleasant, stress-filled, psychological atmosphere can cause your body to produce hormones that prompt you to eat more.**

### **Mealtime Emotions and Your Weight: It's a 2-Way Freeway**

Which leads to this question: Why have we human beings been created with an amazingly strong connection between the brain and the digestive system—a relationship so powerful that the stomach and intestines--our gut--are abundant in nerve cells, even more so than the spinal cord? Why has our mind-body been designed to pay such close attention to our internal environment, meaning our thoughts and emotions, as well as our external surroundings—with the ability to respond accordingly? Mind-body medicine pioneer and neuroscientist Candace B. Pert—who discovered the opiate receptor, the cellular binding site for feel-good endorphins in the brain--provides some insights.

To be more specific... Pert's pioneering work gives us a scientific picture about how environment may influence digestion and increase the drive to overeat. In other words: stress more, eat more.

The story starts with substances called *peptides*, which reside not only in the brain but throughout your entire body. And it is neuropeptides specifically that act as the biological foundation for the awareness we bring to meals—indeed, the consciousness we bring not only to food and eating, but to all aspects of our lives.

What's unique about neuropeptides is this: they're released into the bloodstream by nerve cells. And the link to nerve cells is fascinating because the hormones and other chemicals made by your mind-body create a two-way freeway that serves as a dynamic information network between the brain and the digestive system.

*Consciousness, digestion & weight.* Neuropeptides influence your experience of your world, and vice versa: your consciousness—or mind, thoughts, and emotions—affects your biology. Put another way, your body is strongly influenced by your emotions. Because of this, writes Pert, “the environment in which you eat has a lot to do with your emotional experience at mealtime,” meaning, eat in an unappetizing emotional or physical atmosphere, and, says Pert, “it's a kind of disintegration, a mind-body split that will lead to *weight gain* [italics mine] and disease conditions caused . . . by incomplete digestion.”

*External atmosphere & overeating.* But there's another reason you're likely to eat more and gain weight when you consume food in an unpleasant *external* atmosphere: it also influences the **quality** of food (especially high-carb food) and the **quantity** (or amount) of food you eat. Researchers discovered this when they asked 30 subjects to watch *Love Story*, a sad movie that leads people to cry easily and often.

As the study subjects watched the film, they ate 28 percent more buttered, salty popcorn (124.97 grams versus 97.97 grams) than they did while watching *Sweet Home Alabama*, a breezy comedy.

The same researchers found similar results with college students who were asked to read about children who died in a fire. As they read the heartbreaking news, they ate four times more M&M's than raisins from nearby bowls of snacks. In contrast, when the same students read about a delightful chance reunion among four old friends, they didn't turn to unhealthy food but rather to healthful snacks.

The message: if you want to eat less and weigh less, refrain from using the dining table as a place to argue or scold or think about unpleasant things.

### **From Food and Fuel to Optimal Healing Environments**

Plenty of situations lend themselves to creating unpleasant and discordant psychological and aesthetic eating atmospheres. Consider this common scenario. Imagine you're driving in Anywhere, U.S.A., and you pull into a gas station. When you get out of your car to fuel up, a sign tells you that you need to pay inside. As you walk past other motorists filling their tanks, you register the potent smell of petroleum.

Feeling a bit queasy from the odor, you walk inside to prepay. Instantly, your nostrils are filled with the scent of rancid cooking oil from the fast-food outlet near in the shop; at the same time, the harshness of the overhead fluorescent lighting causes you to squint a bit. While waiting in line, you glance at the TV on the counter that is blasting bad news. You're also privy to a unpleasant discussion between the cashier and the customer in front of you, who claims he's been shortchanged.

While waiting, you look around to locate the source of the unappetizing aroma and realize it's coming from a fast-food outlet that shares space with the gas-station store. As you continue to wait, you notice a customer eating a burger and fries as he walks out the door toward his car.

Given the topic of this episode is "The Weight-Loss Power of Eating in an Unappetizing Atmosphere," here's the question: Now that you're aware of the subtle assault such an atmosphere can make on your psyche and the way it could impact your digestive system, your weight, your entire being--would you now make the conscious decision to not snack or eat until you're in a more pleasing environment?

### **Optimal Eating Environments: An Emerging Field**

Here's another emerging area in the health-and-environment story...

The medical community is becoming more and more aware that environment has a profound impact on health and healing. In response, the Optimal Healing Environments movement is gaining momentum. For instance, at the second symposium on Optimal Healing Environments, more than 50 scientists and clinicians were invited to define *healing environments* and challenges related to creating them.

And, given Larry's and my research on Whole Person Integrative Eating and the discovery of the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style we have identified, the work on healing environments especially captured my attention, because it identified elements that are integral to a healing environment. Get comfortable for a moment. There are 13 elements that lead to healing environments. They are: (1) personal space; (2) sound or noise; (3) temperature; (4) fresh air and ventilation; (5) enjoyable social interaction (called 'social support' in the world of behavioral medicine); (6) warm, natural light; (7) colors; (8) a view and experience of nature; (9) and arts, aesthetics, and entertainment (such as music).

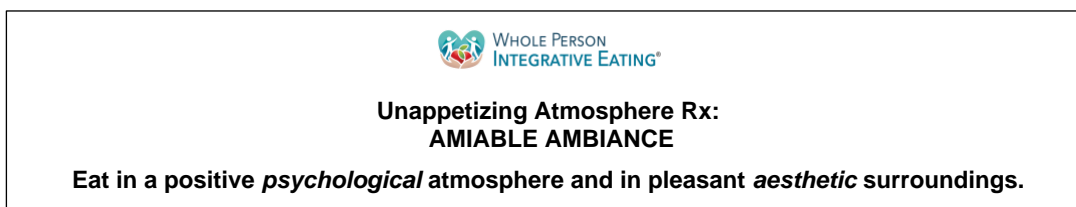
### **Dine by Design**

Here's the takeaway: The research Larry and I did on Whole Person Integrative Eating revealed the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style was linked with overeating. And research by others supports this discovery. What astonished us was that, as with all the new-normal overeating styles we identified, the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style was statistically significant, meaning that it's not due to

chance that when you eat in an Unappetizing Atmosphere, you're at increased risk for overeating and weight gain. In other words, it's a dependable measure of overeating and overweight.

The bottom line: dining in psychologically and aesthetically pleasing surroundings can be a powerful determinant of your weight. With this in mind, commit to “designing” the most pleasant ambiance possible each time you eat. And integrate the Whole Person Integrative Eating guideline I told you about at the start of the chapter into your everyday life: *Eat in a positive psychological atmosphere and in pleasant aesthetic surroundings.*

Here is the Whole Person Integrative Eating (WPIE) antidote to the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style. It is the WPIE guideline for cultivating an Amiable Ambiance each time you eat:



As you become more familiar with this concept, you'll have plenty of opportunities to pay attention to--and to eat in--environments that can nourish both body and soul.

After all, most of us know that eating in congenial surroundings is, at the very least, enjoyable. This is good news since you can even use your imagination to access or create delightful surroundings anytime. For instance, envision a fall picnic, surrounded by the colors of the season in the leaves and in the deep orange of pumpkin soup. Or think of the soothing comfort of a homemade stew eaten in winter as candlelight flickers.

Here are some practical, step-by-step tips to create amiable dining environments. And consider this: create your own nourishing dining atmosphere whenever possible.

### 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

### PRACTICAL STEPS:

#### CRAFT AMIABLE EATING ATMOSPHERES

Here is the Whole Person Integrative Eating (WPIE) antidote to the Unappetizing Atmosphere overeating style. It is the WPIE guideline for cultivating an Amiable Ambiance each time you eat:





**Unappetizing Atmosphere Rx:  
AMIABLE AMBIANCE**

**Eat in a positive *psychological* atmosphere and in pleasant *aesthetic* surroundings.**

### **Crafting Amiable Eating Atmospheres**

Today's In-Action Exercise is some practical steps you can take to CREATE AMIABLE EATING ATMOSPHERES. The concept: To increase your odds of achieving and maintaining optimal weight, create affable *psychological* and *aesthetically* pleasing dining milieus as often as possible. Here are 3 suggestions to get started:

**Cherish china.** When Oprah did a show on “anti-aging breakthroughs,” a weight-loss lifestyle was one of the topics. To highlight the elements of her successful weight loss, an audience member shared her personal success story. Along with moving more and choosing fresh food, she created an aesthetic atmosphere as part of her twenty-two-pound weight loss. “I put my portion [of food] on beautiful plates, with great style, lovely linens, crystal, [and] china, and enjoyed every morsel,” she said. “No more standing in the kitchen eating out of a little container.”<sup>7</sup> Whenever possible, eat on quality plates with your best utensils, and sit down at a dining table to enjoy your meal even more.

**Release negative emotions.** Thanks to Candace Pert’s research on emotions and digestion, it’s safe to say that the psychological atmosphere in which you eat influences the way you metabolize food and in turn your weight and well-being. That’s why you’ll find it helpful to release toxic molecules of emotion when you eat. If you find yourself ruminating about something unpleasant, put your emotions on hold and press the pause button as you eat; instead, think about something agreeable. You can always return to the problem later. Or, if the people with whom you’re dining are more negative than positive, try to redirect the conversation by asking them to share something that’s working well or is enjoyable in their lives.

**Rest, relax.** A friend of ours who is a yogi told us that after she shared a large lunch in the home of a revered family in India, her hosts invited her to lie down and rest so that she could digest the meal in a peaceful and quiet environment. In a time- and work-driven country such as the U.S., this isn’t a realistic option, but what we can do is a modified version: after eating, take the time to enjoy some easygoing conversation with others, relaxing music, or an interesting article.

**Walk away.** A friend of mine told me that not too long after she read our research paper on the overeating styles,<sup>6</sup> she was feeling hypoglycemic (weak from low blood sugar) and hungry in the middle of the day while “choring.” She made the spontaneous decision to buy a sweet from a gourmet cookie shop to quickly appease her hunger. But she was dissuaded from staying by the acid-rock music that blasted from speakers and by the uninterested clerks who talked among themselves instead of taking her order. She found a friendlier place down the block for a midday munch. When you eat out—whether it’s a full meal or a munchie—choose an amiable place whenever possible.

**Limit lighting.** One of our favorite restaurants has low-hanging lights above each booth, which we find harsh (although good friends of ours from Germany like this lighting a lot because they enjoy having a good view of their food). Each time we eat there, we think about how much more we’d enjoy the meal and the entire dining experience if instead it were infused with candlelight. When you eat at home, consider diffusing the light by turning on a nearby lamp, dimming your overhead light, or adding candles near the food in front of you.

**Eat outside.** If you have access to a park near your house, outdoor dining tables and chairs in the courtyard where you work, or a café that enables you to eat outdoors, take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy fresh air and beautiful surroundings—weather permitting, of course! And there’s another benefit: you can get a little exercise while walking to your favorite outdoor eating place.

To review these strategies--as well as some others--please visit [HealingSecretsPodcast.com](https://HealingSecretsPodcast.com), then open the 'In-Action' CTA next to the yellow light bulb for Episode 16.

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

If you would like a summary of today's In-Action Exercise, please visit [HealingSecretsPodcast.com](https://HealingSecretsPodcast.com). Then look for the yellow light bulb next to the "In-Action" CTA. At [HealingSecretsPodcast.com](https://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.*