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## Time to Eat!

*Fear less, hope more; eat less, chew more; whine less, breathe more; talk less, say more; hate less, love more; and all good things will be yours.* — Swedish proverb

*Wuando si mangia non si parla, (Whenever you eat, don't talk.)* — Italian saying

*Stop inhaling your food!* — Lots of mothers

In this crazy, busy, multitasking world where 51% of Americans want to lose weight,<sup>1</sup> and 66% of British women and 44% of British men are dieting,<sup>2</sup> what if simply slowing down and chewing more was the answer to weight loss and better health? What percentage of people might be willing to stop rushing through meals or multitasking? Would you?

One study that illustrates the importance of slowing down your eating appeared in the March 2014 issue of the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.<sup>3</sup> Researchers found that you may consume fewer calories over the course of a meal when you eat slowly and chew thoroughly.

Another study<sup>4</sup> in the June 2014 issue of the same journal had similar findings. Namely, increasing the number of chews before swallowing reduced food consumption

in adults of all body sizes. An additional finding was that normal-weight people tend to chew more slowly in general than those who are overweight or obese.

When we eat, receptors are activated as the stomach fills. These signal the brain. As partially digested food enters the small intestine, hormones are released and you feel full and satiated. These reactions take time, however, and when we wolf down our food, we eat more than needed before these reactions have a chance to take place. As a result we over-eat and the body is overwhelmed trying to process much more food than it needs.

Chewing actually releases serotonin and is important to happiness. It begins the secretion of hormones and activates taste receptors. Ever eat something so fast that you did not even taste it? I have. Chewing also prepares your stomach and pancreas to do their jobs. This is why it is important to chew smoothies and other liquid meals. “Drink your food and chew your liquids” is an old New Age saying. In other words, chew your food until it is liquid. If you are ingesting a liquid, chew it.

Antonio Stanchich, a Holocaust prisoner, made an astonishing discovery about chewing during his internment. Many prisoners died from starvation and working hard without any supporting nourishment. Stanchich discovered that when he was thirsty, if he chewed water, it gave him energy. This sounds crazy, I know. He experimented with differing numbers of chews and found 50 to be optimal. He shared this information with a couple of others and they began to track their chewing. Two years later, the war ended. Of the prisoners that Stanchich knew, only two others survived: those who chewed their water.

When I first heard this story, I was skeptical. A few days later I found myself leading a hike with someone completely unfit for the hike. What should have taken 40 minutes took more than 3 hours. It was midday and the sun was blazing. I had no food. I was down to my last half inch of water and starting to get dizzy. I began chewing my water 50 times per small sip. To my amazement, I gained energy and stamina! Really! Since then, I have been a faithful chewer.

I encourage you to begin experimenting. Start small. Pick one meal—preferably breakfast or lunch—and give your food 10 minutes of undivided attention. Notice how it tastes. Perhaps even count your chews initially. Notice how creamy food becomes after 50 chews. As this becomes a regular habit, you will know when it has reached the right consistency. Do this for a week. Notice if your mealtimes



feel different. Notice if how much you eat changes. Notice how you feel after eating.

Let's look at this from an energy point of view for a moment. How many of you have a ritual of centering and grounding before you begin working with a client or on yourself? Preparation is key to focusing your attention and energy. When you are doing the work, are you also thinking about what to make for dinner or whether the laundry can wait another day? No, because multitasking does not work. You know if you were to do that, neither task would receive the full benefit of the work. Digestion is the same.

When we are eating, we need to focus on the task at hand. I postulate that the habit of praying before eating has two purposes: to express gratitude and to calm the system and prepare for digestion. In a future article I will write about the importance of calming the parasympathetic nervous system when eating. For now, center, ground and put all your energy into the experience of eating—chewing and noticing how you feel.

Looking at food, just as we look at the energy field and assess its current state, what colors do you see? Is the arrangement pleasing? Is there a variety of shapes (which will mean a variety of textures for your tongue to enjoy)? Do you notice any enticing aromas? Smelling food also influences which enzymes are secreted. Some people may even connect with the energy in their food as I have written about in previous columns.

Again, I challenge each of you to pick one meal a day for the next week and focus on eating. Count your chews until you develop the habit. Notice how you feel, changes in energy levels and whether how much you consume changes. Feel free to let me know what happens by connecting with me on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/wildsuccess.us/>. €



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