Are You Hungry?

I know most of my posts have to do with emotional health and feeling good. This week I wanted to share with you a secret (I've been writing a book!) and offer you a sneak peek. One of the things I have been writing about is food. We all need it for energy; the brain the body need fuel to function. Simple enough, right? Sure, but if we know food is about function, why is there is so much food addiction?

For those of us who work with food and wellness, it's no surprise our society is more overweight than ever before (I'll be writing more about this soon). Even though we have more information and knowledge than ever before, food allergies and sensitivities, and emotional disorders ranging from depression to ADD are on the rise. What gives?

We are hungry for and actually starving for a nutrient dense diet.

Some many clients that would be considered obese laugh when they hear they are actually starving. How is that possible? Think about this scenario. A person who is always hungry, looking for something – even after they eat. The question is, what are they eating? The state of our food is embarrassing. The nutrient load is incredibly low, our grocery aisles are stacked with GMOs (mostly in packaged foods), and hybridization has left us with strange fruits and veggies. Who needs an orange the size of a head? And then there are the chemicals in and on our food. All of these things together don't allow for the brilliance of our inner systems to actually absorb food. Instead they respond as if the food we eat is foreign and potentially harmful.

Many people say, "I can't afford to eat organic" or "I don't have time." Well, I agree, it's challenging at times, but can we really afford not to? After an incident with a walnut

ladden russian tea cake over the holidays, my niece recently discovered she is highly allergic to tree nuts. Overloaded and overstressed, her little system started to shut down and go into shock. Real food does not do this. Our body is looking for the real deal. Nutrient rich, whole, natural foods click into our cells' receptors like a lock and key, nourishing us on a deep level. At the very least, buy organic fruits and veggies on the dirty dozen list. You can download an app to help you remember which ones to avoid. For more insights on eating a nutrient rich diet, follow Chris Kressor. His weekly emails are full of insights and new science on eating for health.

We Are Hungry For Connection

So lets' say you *are* eating right and you are still hungry. You buy all the right foods, you eat well, and are taking care of yourself, and still you find yourself plowing through nuts or a bag of pita chips when you know there isn't any way you could *need* more food. It's all about connection, baby. Food is one of our very first comforts. Think of a nursing babe. Not only is feeding one of the first things we do, but it's one of our first ways of communicating. Early on, we form a strong association between physical and emotional nourishment. Food is delicious, delightful, and we need it. And, food can also be soothing when we would rather not face a situation or feel an emotion. Food is an effective distraction. But, using it as a crutch just leaves us empty.

I found that when I really understood what was motivating me to eat, I was no longer inexplicably hungry all the time. Explore your own relationship with food and emotion with Karen Koenig's the *Food Feeling Workbook.*

So, next time you go for a second helping or midnight snack when you know you don't need it, ask yourself, "What is it that I really want?" It could be touch, or a good chat with a

friend, or even confronting something you've been avoiding. Feed yourself with the love that you need and deserve.

We Are Hungry For Happiness

You've got a gut feeling, turns out that's not just a phrase, there's a real gut-brain connection. Scientist are now confirming that our brains are more influenced by our bodies than we had thought. There was a misconception for years that our brain's emotional chemistry—the happy hormones like dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin—was made in our brain (because that's where it is found), but it turns out this is untrue. These hormones are born and bred in our tummy, well, our intestines, actually.

There's a lot going on in our gut. If we don't have the healthy bugs (you know, probiotics) in our gut we not only can't digest and absorb the nutrients from our food, but our bodies also can't create those happy hormones for good emotional health. So if the environment in your gut (your gut's microbiome) is not a friendly place for the good stuff to grow, you may suffer from mood swings or even weight gain.

Taking a daily probiotic is one step toward good gut health. Eating a nutrient rich, low carb diet, like a paleo diet, is another way. Robb Wolf came up with the paleo diet after a number of near death health issues. He found that what he was eating was actually killing him.

Think you might have gut issues and want to explore more? Find a functional medicine doctor in your area or follow Robb Wolf who co-founeded the paleo movement with Mark Sission, biochemist and biologist.

We Are Hungry For Safety

When we have fear in our bodies, our sympathetic nervous

system has two options: fight or flight. If we cannot escape the situation, we have to fight, or so our body thinks. Of course, this reaction is instinctual. We don't actually know this is happening; it's hardwired into our bodies. So, when we feel afraid, we seek protection. Sometimes we arm up by getting the hockey stick out; other times we do it with food. Taking on weight creates a layer of "Don't look at me," or "I can't feel what you said," or "I don't need that kind of attention." It's your bodies way of trying to help. Sometimes help is not helpful. In reality, the weight gain causes a loop of self loathing and frustration, not to mention health issues. If you don't feel safe, rather than run, call up a good therapist and start sharing. If you don't feel that brave yet, start with a friend or a journal. Let it out before it eats your aliveness.

We Are Hungry For Satisfaction/Reward

Weight is also wait. When we are overweight, we are actually putting something off. What do you want that you are afraid of stepping into? Don't delay. Do the thing you are denying yourself – right now. It's amazing how we can sabotage ourselves from getting the exact thing we desire. Just decide to stop waiting and start living now. You don't have to do everything at once, but take just a small step. Send one email, spend five minutes on the treadmill, skip dessert. You get the picture. This is your life. Start living it fully.

You don't need to radically change your diet or lifestyle overnight, but you deserve to know that you can set yourself free. Here are a few places to start:

- **DO:** Shop from the perimeter of your grocery store – where the real food lives
- **DO:** Eat less processed, boxed, or packaged foods
- **DO:** Eat up your connection to friends, family, and fun

daily

- **DON’T:** Skip a daily dose of healthy probiotic with bifidus on an empty stomach.
- **DON’T:** Stuff your underlying issues around body image, safety, and old tapes of fear.
- **DON’T:** Waste one more day weighting/waiting…

This is your life, my friend. Go live it.