Mindful Eating….Stop and Smell the Pesto!

You’re working hard on a project and it’s time for a treat. You’ve been holding off, waiting for the delicious taste of (fill in the blank) a piece of chocolate, a latte, strawberries?

You take the first bite or sip---mmmmm, yummy! Second bite, still yummy, maybe a bit less than the first, but still good. You reconnect your attention to your computer screen and continue eating.

Wait! Where did the food go? It’s gone! There may be remnants on your fingers or the lingering taste on your tongue—but it’s disappeared while you weren’t looking… or tasting, or smelling, or enjoying. RATS!—it’s gone, I missed it—better go get another.....

The next step is either eating more (which you may not really need) and/or being self-critical about your eating—which can lead to an unhealthy relationship with food. The problem lies in the lack of awareness of the messages coming from our body. Mindful eating helps us learn to listen to what our bodies tell us about enjoyment, hunger and satisfaction.

What is Mindful Eating?

Mindful Eating is based on the Buddhist concept of mindfulness which involves being fully aware of what is happening within and around you at the moment. Applied to eating, it means immersing oneself in the experience of eating food. Studies suggest that mindful eating can alleviate weight problems, can be utilized as an effective treatment for binge-eating and often results in more healthful food choices.

How to Give Mindful Eating a Try:

- Create mealtime ambiance. Candles and flowers create a serene environment to help foster intention and gratitude.
- When you eat, just eat. Turn off electronics and focus on the food.
- Tune into the aroma and color of the food. Think about where the food came from—the sun, rain and earth, the sacrifice of the animals, the people harvesting, transporting and preparing the food.
- Consider silence. Start with short periods of silence while eating.
- Chew patiently. Aim for 25 “chews” per bite. Savor the often changing flavor and texture.
- Evaluate your satiety. Do you feel you need to finish that hamburger now just because it’s still there or because you want to finish it? Do you want another flavor or texture instead?
- Evaluate why you are eating…but don’t judge. Ask yourself: “Does my body need this? Why am I eating this? Is it because I’m sad, stressed, bored, repeating a habit?
- Plant a garden and cook. Reconnect with the processes of creating food.