

## **Food: Sustenance or sacrifice? Part One**

Are you feeding yourself in a way that is sustainable for the sake of your personal health and wellbeing or are you sacrificing a nutritious diet, and thus your health, in order to survive in the Rat Race?

There are some worrying statistics being reported in the media. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), obesity has reached epidemic proportions globally: more than a billion adults are overweight, of which at least 300 million of them are clinically obese. Obesity is rising faster in Britain than in any other Western European nation and if the present trend continues, half the population of Britain will be obese by 2020. In the USA, the weight of 1:3 adults has reached danger levels.

At the same time, we are throwing away a third of our food, on average, according to a recent report in Planet Ark. Yet, whilst enjoying this apparent glut in the West, we are also undernourished due to the denaturing of our food that occurs as a result of factory farming methods and commercial food processing.

How do we make sense of this and feed ourselves in a way that nourishes us and preserves the planet?

### **Attitudes to food.**

How will you know if you're sacrificing your health in order to survive in the Rat Race?

If you believe that food is:

1. Something that you use just to combat hunger.
2. Something that you use just to induce pleasant sensations.
3. Something that you use as a reward for good behaviour.
4. Something that you use as consolation when things go wrong.
5. Something that you buy from the nearest supermarket when you can find a few minutes between other more pressing engagements.
6. Often a takeaway or eaten in a restaurant, especially when you are stressed or feeling short of time.
7. Stored mostly in your freezer and cooked mostly in your microwave.

...then the chances are that you are caught in this dilemma.

I suspect most of us will be able to recognise those behaviour traits in ourselves. Many of them will stem from our conditioning; our upbringing in a society where food is big business and our food supply is dominated by a few large, highly profitable manufacturers. The drive of these companies to make a profit appears to take precedence over any social responsibility towards the health and wellbeing of its customers.

What are the alternatives?

How can you downshift your eating habits, de-stress your attitude to food and make nourishing yourself a more sustainable activity for yourself and for the planet?

### **Change Catalyst**

I've noticed during my coaching that for some people changing their eating habits can be the catalyst that motivates them to leave the rat race and live more consciously. When we examine the values we want to live by, being in good health often underpins everything else we wish to change. It can be a very easy first step to start substituting fresh, locally grown, organic produce for highly processed food. We can consciously set aside more time for food preparation to ensure that we nourish ourselves. Often the benefits of making such changes are felt very quickly in terms of an improvement in general health and also savings in the food budget.

### **Links with Nature**

Food is an important link between us, as human beings, and nature. That can be a difficult one to remember when what appears on supermarket shelves as "food" reveals very few clues as to its natural origins. We are, literally, what we eat, since the food we eat, at a fundamental, elemental level is what the body uses to replace and replenish itself. Think very hard about this next time you eat or drink something – is this what I really want my body to use as basic building blocks for "me"? How much of what I'm eating or drinking will my body regard as foreign or toxic and how much of it will it recognise as useful, wholesome nutrition?

We can move from the Rat Race mentality of “food is fuel” to the simple living philosophy of “food is nourishment” by making a few simple changes in our lives. These involve:

1. Deciding that our health and wellbeing is high priority.
2. Deciding to nourish ourselves in a way that is in alignment with our values.
3. Taking time from our busy working lives in order to plan how and where we buy food.
4. Making time to prepare homemade meals.
5. Enjoying the physical sensations, the creative processes involved and social opportunities that mealtimes offer.

In part two of this article, we'll look at the roles that nurturing, spirituality, sensuality and gratitude play in providing ourselves with nourishing food.

### **Suggestions for further reading:**

The Science of Cooking – Peter Barham  
Grow Younger Live Longer – Deepak Chopra

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Sally Lever, Downshifting and Sustainable Living Coach, supports and inspires those who are leaving the Rat Race for a less stressful, more meaningful way of life. She offers one-to-one coaching, teleclasses on “How to Step off the Treadmill” and a free email newsletter.