

Chapter Three

Do you know your body's needs?

In order to get to know yourself through your food intake, the first thing to find out is whether you listen properly to your body's physical needs. When you are conscious of listening to your body, it means that you are listening just as much to your emotional and mental bodies and their needs. If you are not listening to your physical body, you will consequently learn that the same is true for the other "bodies".

Our three bodies, which constitute our material envelope and allow us to live on this planet, cannot be dissociated from one another. Everything that happens in one body automatically affects the other two. It is therefore wiser to be alert to what you experience in your physical body, as it is more concrete than the other two.

That is why I am reminding you of what it means to "listen to the needs of your physical body". Although most of us learned these things in earliest childhood, it is important to call them to mind again. Our physical body needs:

- ◆ to breathe (air);
- ◆ to drink (water);
- ◆ to eat (food/nourishment);
- ◆ to move (physical exercise);

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- ◆ to rest and to sleep.

In this chapter, I'll be dwelling especially on the need to eat – we will look at the other needs in Chapter Six. If you are like me, when we were young and heard people talk about eating what was good for you, we understood: “only eat boring food” or “deny yourself anything delicious” or “if it's good for your health, it's bound to taste awful” or possibly, “be careful about everything you eat” (which represents a lot of work). And what about you? What does your brain register, when you hear that it's important to listen to the dietary needs of your physical body?

My purpose in reviewing these needs is not to get you to take “control”. Far from it. In fact I know today that this is hardly the solution. That is why I discourage any form of control, whether on the physical or the emotional and mental levels. My intention is above all to help you realize that your body – which is your vehicle in this life – is like any other type of “carriage”: If it is not maintained and given adequate attention and care, it will not last as long and will not be able to function at full capacity.

Let me remind you the main reasons why we need to eat:

- ▶ To ensure our physical and psychic growth and development
- ▶ To maintain a healthy body
- ▶ To preserve the body's natural immunity
- ▶ To ensure continuation of the species.

So, we do not eat in the first instance for the pleasure of tasting or to satisfy our hunger. Those two reasons should

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be secondary in people's minds. That is the main reason why we need to be cautious about the food choices we make and the quality of what we ingest.

The six essential nutrients

Your body needs six nutrients to function properly. It will let you know which one it needs when you feel hungry or thirsty. It may need water, protein, lipids (fat), carbohydrates (sugar), vitamins or minerals.

When you ingest any other element, you give your body a big chore to do, depleting some of its energy, in contrast to the desired goal of good nutrition, which is to help your body build energy. It indicates that you are not listening to your needs, in general. For example, refined sugars, white starch, non-essential fats, alcohol, tobacco, caffeine and any chemicals (including medications) are all ingredients that require a lot of work on the part of your body's digestive, absorptive and eliminative functions.

You will learn, in this book, what motivates you to nourish your body one way rather than another. I have yet to meet a person who ALWAYS listens to their body's needs. What is reassuring is that our body is extraordinarily strong and flexible and knows through its innate intelligence, that the natural state of the human is to live in harmony. To achieve this harmony, we need to learn to love ourselves more, before we can succeed in listening to our real needs, on all levels.

I have no intention whatsoever of making you feel guilty when you notice that you do not listen to your needs. This

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new consciousness is to be used **ONLY** for the purpose of helping you get to know yourself.

With respect to the six essential nutrients, it is of course important to remember that the more natural the ingredients are, the happier your body will be by virtue of its digestive system not having to work as hard.

Water. After air, this is our body's greatest need, as water constitutes about 65% of our body. Water is necessary for the blood and the tissues, as well as to transport nutrients, eliminate waste and help the body regulate its temperature.

When you are thirsty, all your body needs is pure water. If you take a drink of pure water, rather than a drink of water filled with chemicals, it makes a significant difference. To see the proof, place a glass of pure water at room temperature beside a glass of impure water – for example, water that has been treated with chlorine – for twenty-four hours. Then, taste the water from each glass. This experiment will tell you what it means to drink pure water.

Moreover, it is good to remember that your body regularly needs at least two liters of water per day, in order to replace what you lose through your urine, from perspiring, and through the pores of your skin. Unfortunately, you cannot include in those two liters any water or other liquid that has been converted into a drink of coffee or tea or any other drink. As soon as water loses the key quality of being absolutely pure, that is, of being only H₂O and nothing else, it means the liquid must be filtered by the digestive system. Pure water, on the other hand, is absorbed by the body as it is.

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Each of us is capable of adopting new habits. Have you noticed the ease with which a person who has decided to take up smoking always remembers their pack of cigarettes? As you can see, all it takes is a decision. So, how about deciding to always remember your personal water bottle? For the first few weeks, you might need to put some reminder notes in an obvious spot so that you think of it. But I can assure you that this good habit can only benefit you.

You also need to remember that as soon as your body is thirsty, any other drink you take will not really be able to quench that thirst. On the contrary, it will only make it worse! Did you know, for instance, that a bottle of cola contains the equivalent of eight teaspoons of sugar? And that for every cup of coffee you drink, your body eliminates twice that amount of water? What this means is that if your body has to handle four cups of coffee a day, it will need four additional glasses of water – in addition to the two liters recommended daily. Note that beer has the same effect as coffee in this regard.

Let us now touch on the other five nutrients briefly, for as you know, the main purpose of this book is not to teach you healthy eating habits. It is designed to help you get to know yourself through the way you eat rather than to help you have control.

Protein. Protein is necessary for the building, maintenance and repair of our cells. Protein fosters growth, for example, the growth of hair, nails, etc.

If you ingest natural protein, as found in legumes, nuts, grains and cereals, it is much easier for your body to use than animal protein. If you nourish your body with animal

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protein that comes from a contented animal, that is, one that is raised out in nature, rather than in an “animal factory”, this also makes a difference.

Lipids. Their most important role, among others, is to bring to the body a concentrated source of energy and to maintain an energy reserve in the adipose tissues. The lipids are of great importance for a healthy skin.

The body, for its part, needs especially unsaturated fats that are plant-based. Saturated fats, of animal origin, are not essential fatty acids. While our body needs essential fatty acids, it is unable to produce them.

Carbohydrates. We all need carbs, our principal source of energy. Likewise, the brain is nourished only by carbohydrates. They exist in the form of sugar or starch. However, it is the natural sugars and the unbleached starches that we should look for.

The carbs the body needs most must come from natural sugars like those contained in fruits. As it takes Vitamin B to transform carbohydrates into energy, what happens when we ingest refined sugars – which don’t contain any Vitamin B – is that instead of providing our body with the necessary energy, we are using it up in order to eliminate these useless carbohydrates. And when they are not eliminated, they are stored in the body.

A natural sugar that is easy to absorb and has a very low glycemic index is agave nectar.



You can easily obtain information about the six essential nutrients from other books or any of several Web sites.

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This would allow you to check to what extent you are demanding a lot of extra work and effort from your body. Already you can see that if you are making it difficult for your body to digest, absorb and eliminate what you drink and eat, it means you are doing the same thing in your day-to-day life: you are asking too much of yourself, you still do not love yourself enough to make your life easier. In a later chapter, we will look at the more precise significance of various foods.

Chewing

Another factor to be taken into account is chewing. The more you chew, the more you activate the salivary glands, which secrete saliva. This has several functions:

- ◆ it cleans the mouth;
- ◆ it dissolves the chemical elements in the food so that the taste can be perceived, thus allowing the pleasure of tasting to be prolonged;
- ◆ it moistens the food, aiding the process of compacting it into a ball of food (bolus);
- ◆ it produces enzymes that break down fats in order to start the process of digestion and make the stomach's work easier;
- ◆ it regulates the pH in the mouth, preventing acid from attacking the teeth thus preserving them.

When you swallow your food as it is, you are skipping this pre-digestion stage and creating problems for the main digestion stage. As a result, you are denying yourself several of the good nutrients that food provides for a human

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being. Don't you think it is unfortunate if you are selecting good foods that are as natural as possible, yet not benefiting from them as fully as possible?

Another benefit of chewing well is that it helps bring out the nutrients in all the foods we eat – especially the most natural foods –, not only for our physical body, but also for our emotional and mental “bodies”. Proper chewing lets us take optimal advantage of all the benefits food offers. Additionally, chewing well on both sides of your mouth allows you to get the real taste of what you are eating, connecting with both the feminine and masculine principles within you. If when you ingest food, you are aware that your three “bodies” (physical, emotional and mental) are being energized and that you are nourishing your masculine and feminine aspects as well, it is highly likely that you will become more attentive to what you choose to eat and will be able to listen more carefully to your body's dietary needs. You will also start to notice that foods become a lot tastier.

Eating slowly and tasting

Chewing properly also aids in stretching out the amount of time it takes to satisfy your appetite. I am not saying this casually it is important that you really take your time when you eat. Furthermore, that doesn't necessarily mean you have to take long breaks between mouthfuls. As far as I am concerned, the best way I have discovered to check whether I am eating slowly or not is to see whether I really taste what I ingest. People like me, who generally do things very rapidly, cannot eat as slowly as people who are slower by nature. I have often heard the suggestion to put down your knife and fork between mouthfuls. The important thing, in

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any event, is to find the method that produces the best result for you.

For my part, when I take the time to chew on both sides of my mouth and I truly taste my food and use my taste buds, I feel that my body is satisfied. Why is it important to taste? So that you know in time when your hunger has been satisfied. Generally speaking, **it is much harder for most of us to know when we are no longer hungry than it is to know when we are hungry.** Have you noticed what happens when you have a bad cold and a stuffed-up nose? It is almost impossible to really taste and savour what you are eating. Consequently you have the impression you have not eaten your fill and you keep feeling dissatisfied and hungry even when you just finished a meal a half hour earlier.

Eating slowly, by the way, has nothing to do with how long you take to finish your meal. Some people talk incessantly while eating, others answer the phone, get up several times to attend to other concerns, read a magazine or a book they find so absorbing they forget to eat. If any of these scenarios fit you, you must surely have noticed that you really do not taste (or hardly taste) your food! Although the meal may have required a lot of preparation time, the mouthfuls could be swallowed quickly.

Let me remind you that not tasting your food when you eat is an indication that you are having difficulty tasting the pleasures of life.

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Giving your body what it needs

It may be that you eat exclusively nourishing good food, but do you give your body what it needs when it needs it?

To find out, all you have to do is take a few seconds before you eat or drink and ask yourself, *DO I REALLY NEED THIS RIGHT NOW?* The first few times, it is almost certain that you won't quite know how to answer the question. We are so skilled at making ourselves believe all sorts of things that it is very easy to say, *Yes, yes, I really feel like having this cake right now.*

Let's take a few seconds to look at the difference between a need and a desire. We much more frequently desire something that does not actually meet our body's needs than we seek what truly does meet its needs. Suppose you are at home and you know there are some delicious little chocolates in a drawer. Just thinking about these chocolates makes your mouth water. It is possible you need them. In order to be sure, ask yourself the following question: *If there wasn't any in the drawer, would I have thought about chocolate?* If you spontaneously answer *YES*, and you are even prepared to go out and get some anywhere you can, it is very likely that you really do need them.

Another way to know if this desire corresponds to a need is to wait at least a half hour and if, at the end of that period of time, you have forgotten that you wanted them, it was just a passing whim. But if the thought persists, it indicates a genuine need.

However, is this need physical or psychological? To know this, ask yourself first of all if you are really hungry.