

## **Choosing Courageous Wellbeing**

### **A Relationship with Food <sup>1</sup>**

by Mary Elaine Kiener, RN, PhD

I used to think I was a foodie--that is, until I met Blue, my newly adopted dog. He seems totally motivated by food, which makes it easy to nurture our relationship with lots of treats to reward his good behavior. Meanwhile, I've been noticing a fresh invitation inside to bring a "healthy yes" to my own relationship with food.

As I "sit with" all this, I first become aware of places inside me that want to stretch and be stretched. Ah, yes - it feels as though it's not "just" my muscles, but also my whole relationship with food that is wanting to stretch.

It's intriguing. While I often learn by how things are similar, I sense that the differences between how Blue and I regard food will influence this discovery process. As much as I LOVE food, I'm neither motivated FOR it nor BY it. Yet, there's something about my relationship WITH it that is wanting to grow and change. For example, I have a "pattern" of going out of my way to get food "on the go" [usually less healthy and often unsatisfying] when I may already have food here at home that's available, and perhaps even prepared.

With a recently made simple change - to consciously choose a meal from food that is already available at home - I also notice a shift in Blue's and my relationship. Now, whenever I prepare food, he's right there next to me, looking for treats. So, no matter what raw fruit or veggie I'm cutting up [that's safe for him to eat], I offer him some. He loves his healthy treats. And our relationship bond continues to strengthen.

I begin to sense inside a mere whisper of something that feels like tears--as if I'm letting go of something from the past. Ah, a budding realization that part of my relationship with food has served as a substitute for whatever nourishing relationships that weren't happening for me as a child. As I dip more deeply inside, allowing time to speak those words aloud, I also feel a physical, constricted tightening around the outside of my throat being met by yearning, yawning stretches from the inside.

Remembering the smoothie I had for breakfast, I also notice a kind of spacious feeling inside. Simultaneously, my body-mind begins to differentiate between sensations of "empty", "spacious", "full"....and something else....Ah, there's a wanting to "stay full" because it's afraid of "being empty". The word "enough" bubbles to the surface, tinged with worry. As I remember that I always seem to "have" enough, it seems this sense of worry is really about not "being" enough!

I feel a bit like the Sankofa bird—that moves forward as it looks backward holding an egg in its mouth. With a grateful smile, I realize this life-giving forward energy involves food!

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<sup>1</sup> Kiener, M.E. (2016, April). Choosing Courageous Wellbeing: A relationship with food. *Sibyl Magazine. For the Spirit and Soul of Woman*. Retrieved from [www.sibylmagazine.com](http://www.sibylmagazine.com).