**Feed Cravings with Kindness**

Fall is upon us. With it can come many sumptuous opportunities to share delicious and plentiful food with friends. Birthday parties, Holiday gatherings, Parties and travel can abound. But what happens when we’ve had enough food nourishment, but more is still there, on the table, in the snack bowls, or being offered repeatedly on circulating platters. We are tempted to have more but are fully satisfied. We may focus on receiving all the other wonderful forms of nourishment, sunshine, friends, laughter, relaxation. Or we might be distracted and find ourselves focusing on the food, in a bit of a war with ourselves, beginning to crave it, especially of special foods we don’t usually have, but realizing and telling ourselves that we are really not hungry any longer.

Rather than stay in a struggle with ourself, we can apply principles and skills of mindfulness and lovingkindness to surf the urge and feed cravings with kindness. In the resulting space that occurs, the craving naturally loses its grip on us. We can make the decision to have a little more or not, free from grasping energy. If we do decide to have more, we can enjoy it mindfully, without any compulsion or mindlessness. People find if they do choose to have more, they choose a much smaller amount and enjoy it even more. Often people discover that their craving simply dissolves in the new space or what they really wanted was the inner connection to the nourishment, love and kindness within themselves that this practice invites.

I developed this craving practice described above many years ago. I share it in my book, “Well Nourished”, in Well Nourished Modules 1 and 2 and it is now an integral part of the MB-EAT Program. This practice can be done in any situation when craving arises whether from a stressful or challenging situation or from an inner trigger such as boredom, stress or procrastination.

***Feed Cravings with Kindness Practice***

1. Close your eyes and imagine a food you tend to crave (or look at it, if it’s in front of you), particularly when a strong emotion such as anxiety or a challenging situation is a trigger. As the image of the food becomes more vivid, notice the craving growing stronger.

2. Notice where the feeling of craving is in the body and explore the shape, size, and sensation of the craving or urge with curiosity and kindness.

3. Imagine a sense of lovingkindness growing in your heart (as in the practice introduced earlier) and filling your body.

4. Envelop the craving in warmth and lovingkindness. Staying with that, put a hand on your heart if you wish (and/or repeat some lovingkindness phrases to yourself).

5. Rest in that sense of warmth and lovingkindness. After a while, look at or imagine the food again and notice if anything has changed.

This practice helps you get control back, and the craving goes down significantly or disappears completely. People are surprised how quickly this happens and that it can happen at all! Perhaps the most profound aspect of this practice is that people often realize, from the inside out, that what they are really craving is love and that they are trying to get it unsuccessfully from the food. When they offer themselves the love, kindness, and self-compassion inherent in this exercise, they become filled with the wellsprings of their own heart.