

# AT THE DINNER TABLE WITH

*Translation by Achille Cattaneo*

## **A new eating model, as old as the world**

After decades of dieting trends, starting from the point diet of the 60s up to more elaborate schemes involving accurate weighing of all the ingredients, passing through the easy, magical, fast diets, based on nutrient-rich, flavorful, ready to drink mush, finally something is changing in the eating scene!

To the crowd of dieticians and nutritionists, who in various capacities have occupied the scene, holding the scepter of knowledge and know-how of weight loss and health, recently figures a little more prudent and compassionate have sprung up, committed to pass into the collective unconscious, now full of detailed information on food, an innovative approach to eating, which is called “intuitive eating”. Intuitive? Yes, that is, as reported by an online dictionary “what can be easily grasped, through an experience that does not pass only from the reasoning mind”. Thus, referred to nutrition, it means that to determine what and how much to eat during the day, it is not to the dictates of the diet that we must refer, but to the body’s intuitive ability or common sense.

Our meals, chosen in this way, would no longer be based on rules coming from the outside, but on personal feelings, and this would reverse the attitude of total split between body and emotions characterizing many diets, heal the breach among our levels and help us take a step forward in the path leading to our biopsychospiritual unity. If, with a slightly passive attitude, we have become enslaved to unrealistic eating patterns aimed at obtaining a model of physical body with which to achieve success or acceptance by others, the intuitive diet represents the return wave to the pole of wisdom, a natural attempt to regain balance from an extreme situation in

which we had bogged down. From this point of view, we realize that there is no innovation in this: it is only the return to what common sense would call “normal” eating, or rather, using a paraphrase in Assagioli’s style, to the “healthy” man’s diet, referring not just to the physical level, but including also emotions and mind. It is the rediscovery of a healthy relationship with food, which helps us to abandon the imposing and mortifying pattern of many diets, based on compulsion, on difficult, complex, abstruse eating, which makes every meal a difficult or boring task to be carried out. There is an epochal shift of our focal point, which moves from the scale to the body: a quantum leap.

How do you eat intuitively? Although the theory is immediately understandable, in practice it is not at all easy to sit down at the table and turn off the usual controlling mode of the “diet regime”, or the excessive loosening up typical of interludes between diets, to rely on signals sent by the body, when we have not yet established a relationship of trust, intimacy and collaboration with it. How can you possibly perceive the language of a perfect stranger? One should learn to ask oneself simple questions such as: “Is this true hunger? What would I like to eat, sweet or savory?” “Without letting the usual background noise, made of requests for immediate gratification or filling of emotional “voids”, affects our listening, or, if one is on a diet, the feelings of guilt, the need for transgression or virtuous obedience to the rules, prevents us to grasp the faint response of a body that has almost always been ignored, except for our claim, to modify it according to our purely aesthetic desires.

The explanation for this contradiction is provided very clearly by psychosynthesis: the relationship we have with our body is conditioned by our internal image of it: in many of us, according to the principle of the ideal model that always works, even if we are not aware of it, a negative unconscious image of our body is caused by equally negative emotions and thoughts, linked to our history and our self-esteem; at the same time, the idealized image of it, nurtured by the media and absolutely alien to our physical reality, governs our food choices and to some even imposes hours of gym, made of fa-

tigue or unsustainable boredom : a kind of punishment because we do not conform to what we think others would like.

This is why we refer to numbers, to quantities, as the only reliable source of information about our body and ourselves. How many kilos have I lost? How many centimeters has the circumference of my biceps increased? And from those numbers we draw the measure of how much we value.

Not to mention that, as stated by the american nutritionist and psychologist Marc David, if we do not like our outward appearance, and this often has little to do with how we really look, this can substantially affect our relationship with food, the type of food we choose and, in a vicious or virtuous circle, the type of body that we contribute to create. For example, if we perceive our body as a heavy burden, creating more hassle than pleasure, we will experience food in a similar way, and probably add a further contribution to our heaviness, consuming high-calorie and high-fat meals. On the contrary, if we are aware of the wonderful instrument that our body is, which works by virtue of amazing and miraculous devices of very high precision, we will choose foods easy to digest and rich in vitamins and minerals to encourage the continuous replacement of these mechanisms, thus contributing to a well-fed and energetic body.

On the other hand, as the American biologist Bruce Lipton asserts, and as Assagioli would have said if he had known Epigenetics, we are not victims of our DNA, but products of our thoughts and emotions. Our beliefs, emotions, stress and the way we eat can change the way our cells work, and modify our genetic material. If it is true that our emotions can be imprinted in water, what kind of environment do we determine for our cells? An area of self-love, or a matrix of judgment, self-condemnation and self-punishment?

To return to intuitive eating and eating for the “healthy” person, I want to present some of Dr. Ellyn Satter’s answers to the question “What does it mean to eat normally?”

- Choose the food you like, eat and finish when you are satisfied, not because “you must”
- Organize in time what to eat, in order to have nutritious food, without being so restrictive or wary to take away any pleasure
- in short, eating means being flexible, responding to hunger, taking into account your commitments, how close you are to a food source, and your emotions.

The “intuitive” name given to this modality of approach to food, healthy and normal, immediately brought me back to the star diagram, and to the function pointing upwards. There are indeed a series of steps, inherent in this mode of nutrition, which concern intuition.

When we are able to abandon the quantitative pole of nutrition made of kilos, centimeters, calories, portions, percentages, number of days and sizes - of which we are slaves - and establish a relationship of trust with our body, we move towards the pole of quality and from this position, through our meals we can offer nourishment also to our soul.

Shall we try it?