

Ep #16: Attentive Eating



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With Your Host

C. René Washington

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Ep #16: Attentive Eating

“She began to measure herself in contentment and laughter rather than inches and pounds.”

Welcome to Midlife Woman Redefined, a podcast for women near retirement who are ready to step into a new chapter of freedom, travel, and fulfillment. If you're ready to focus on figuring out who you are and what you really want, this is the place for you. Here's your host, master certified life coach, travel addict, and midlife maven, René Washington.

Hello, Mavens, this is C. René Washington, your life coach and midlife maven. And we are here for episode 16 of *Midlife Woman Redefined*. Today's topic, eating attentively.

We're in the midst of the End Like You Want to Begin series so that you can get your life together before the end of the year, before we go into a new decade – we're going into a new decade – and rock 2020. Before we do that, let's celebrate.

And remember, we celebrate something individual to ourselves, something that you can say, “Yes, I did that.” Today, I'm celebrating midlife flexibility; the ability to shift and change and move in whatever direction you want to, specifically for me, I've been paying attention to this inner nudging to change my business paradigm.

And what that means is, after the end of the year, I won't be doing any more individual coaching. I'm all in on this podcast. I just love it so much. And I'm writing a book and I may do some speaking engagements connected to that and I'm doing some collaborations, and so I've changed it up. We get to do that. We get to do whatever we want to do, and that's why I love midlife.

So, let's dig into eating attentively. We are in the midst of the End Like You Want to Begin series and, up to now, we've talked about – in episode 11, I started out with getting rid of your shoulds and oughts, you know, living mostly in obligation. Not that we don't do some things that we're obligated to do, but if you find yourself living mostly in obligation and what you should

Ep #16: Attentive Eating

do and ought to do. And you know what that feels like because you feel frustrated, resentment, you know what it feels like.

And then in episode 12, I did the let that shit go episode, the benefits of why we don't want to carry extra weight in our lives, these things that are heavy that burden us down. Again, it connects to the shoulds and the oughts and why it is imperative that we learn how to let that go.

In episode 13, I officially kicked off the series and asked you what your big why is for making the change that you want to make. I make change based on my passion for life, my passion for the work I do, and that passion is connected to helping women find their passion and live their personal brand of freedom and to focus in on and spend time doing the things that I like to do with the people I love doing them with.

Episode 14 was about detoxing your environment. What are you allowing into your environment, whether it's coming in through media, through the people in your life? What do you need to detox from your environment? And episode 15 was about pleasure, incorporating daily pleasure into your life and why that's important.

Now, today, the topic of attentive eating, as I've said, the main reference I'm using is Susan Hyatt's BARE book. And BARE is about losing weight without dieting, being more conscious of how you see yourself and learning how to love yourself. The foundational question of BARE is, "Does this feel like love?"

And the attentive eating section is a big reason why I was even attracted to BARE. So I've said before, I work on mindset. Mindset is the foundation of anything that you want to successfully do. If your mind ain't right, it's not going to go right. And even if it starts out right, it won't last if you don't have your mind right.

And when we think about eating, we think that, you know, if you want to lose pounds, we have to eat a certain way. And this is true, but not in the way that you think, and that's why I love this focus because when I first

Ep #16: Attentive Eating

heard about BARE, as I've said, I was tracking, and I was so tired of tracking and counting calories and what I was eating. I was so tired of that.

And this is what fuels the billion-dollar diet industry, right, all these different diets. And as Susan says in the BARE book, we typically think of food in two categories; skinny foods and fat foods. And we want to think of that differently.

And I want to read a little excerpt from the BARE book that breaks this down for you. "What does it mean to eat with attentiveness? A lot of people think that they need to meticulously track everything they eat, either by recording meals in a smart phone app, by writing things down in a food journal, or by measuring food and sticking to specific guidelines, tracking every carb or calorie. You don't have to live this way.

For most people, this kind of obsessive food tracking is tiring, distracting, unpleasurable, depressing, and counterproductive. It's like a part-time job with no pay or benefits. And instead of tracking, we eat attentively, and that means you pay attention to how your body feels. If you're hungry, you eat. If you're starting to feel full, you stop, you slow way down when you're eating, you don't rush through your meals, you take your time, you breathe and allow yourself to actually experience the food that you're eating. And instead of worrying about how much you eat, you tune into your body and let your body tell you exactly when you've had enough."

I'm telling you, this works. When you start feeling those physical signals telling you, hey, I'm getting full, then you stop. Now, it takes practice to learn how to recognize these signals if you have been a highly distracted mindless eater. But you can switch it. You can flip it.

Eating attentively also means that you let your body tell you what it wants to eat. And our bodies tell us, you know, in the body compass episode, I told you that our bodies hold a lot of information for us, including what is good for us to eat. And I use that word good, when I say good – because in BARE, there are no bad foods. It's what's good for you specifically, and that can vary from person to person.

Ep #16: Attentive Eating

You listen to your body's signals. You tune in. Maybe you discover that your body handles gluten just fine, but dairy not so much. Maybe you discover that one glass of wine with dinner is fine but two is going to mess up your sleep. I'm a one-glass drinker, let me just tell you. I know that about myself, I cannot drink. If I drink two, I really need to be going to the house. That's it for me. I will be going to sleep in a few minutes.

You pay attention to how food is interacting with your body. Eating attentively also means that you celebrate food. You savor it. You cherish it. You eat like a European, like a Frenchwoman, slowly, appreciatively. Mealtimes become a pleasurable moment in your day. Dining, eating becomes a part of your pleasure practice.

So we let go of all of that tracking and we focus in on the how and the what. And this breaks down into how you even set up yourself to eat. You know, how some of us, we save the good dishes for special occasions? No, you get your beautiful plate, your beautiful glassware, your beautiful stemware and you use it every day. This is a part of your pleasure practice, which is a part of your eating attentively practice so that when you sit down to eat a meal, it is a joyous occasion.

Now, some of you will say, "I'm too busy for that." It is so worth it to take the time because you will feel so much differently when you do it. And no, you won't always be able to do it, but most of the time, this is how we want to treat ourselves well. I'm not a cloth napkin person, but if you are, then get out your nice cloth napkins or go get you some and see how that makes you feel.

If you use paper napkins, get nice paper napkins. Vanity, I think, is the name of the brand that I use. And let it be an occasion. Don't eat distractedly, you know, you're on your phone or you watch television – and I will admit, I've lost that battle with my husband. If I'm eating with him, the TV will be on. But at least we're talking to each other. As much as possible, minimize distractions.

And don't beat yourself up about what you eat, just pay attention to what you eat. If I want the pie, I eat the pie. I just know why I'm eating the pie. If

Ep #16: Attentive Eating

I'm eating the pie to numb myself or because I'm stressed, then that's not so good. And the way you know that is, we don't divide these foods into these foods are going to make me skinny or these foods are going to make me fat.

No, we divide foods into power foods and pleasure foods. Power foods are the foods that make you feel energized, make you feel stronger. They fuel you up. Pleasure foods are the foods that are deliciously decadent and fun. They might not have a lot of nutritional value, but you love them. And that's okay.

Most of the time, we want to be eating power foods. But don't get all caught up with that about, oh I've overdone it. Your body will let you know when you've overdone it, just pay attention.

So, this past weekend, I was on the beach in Florida and discovered this wonderful frozen custard place called Whit's Frozen Custard. And every day I was there, I had my cup of vanilla frozen custard swirled in with sea salt caramel and marshmallow toppings. Oh my gosh, I can taste it right now.

I did not feel bad about it at all because whenever I got my cup, I ate it attentively. I paid attention to every spoonful going down and I enjoyed it. And this is how you want to treat food.

So what are the benefits of eating attentively? There are many. One, you eat less because you're paying attention to how the food that you're eating is affecting your body, and you learn the signal of satiation. Because when we eat fast and distractedly, we don't allow the food going in our body to get to our brain that tells us that we're full.

When you slow it down, you pay attention, you actually taste what's going in your mouth and you allow yourself to feel how it's going down your throat into your body, then you get the signal. You know what, this is good and I'm full.

Ep #16: Attentive Eating

My sister used to tell my nieces, make a happy plate, which meant they had to eat everything on their plate. No, a happy plate is food that you enjoy and that you stop eating when you're full. That's a happy plate.

My downfall is I don't like hot food to be cold. And so I have this bad habit of eating fast because I want to eat it fast while it's still hot. So I've had to learn how to slow myself down and allow myself to not eat too quickly because of that.

Another benefit of eating attentively is that it snowballs into the rest of your life. It is a good partner for your body compass. You actually learn how to trust yourself more because once you start paying attention to how you eat, you become more attentive in other areas of your life, which can translate into small changes and even big changes.

The change that I mentioned at the beginning of the podcast about how I'm changing up my business, I know that building that habit of eating attentively and tuning into my body compass, that's how I got to that change. And when I get ready to switch it up again, I will. It's okay.

You also learn how to reassess memory. There are some things that we eat based off of old memories, typically childhood memories. And I have noticed, as I've built this attentive eating muscle, that a lot of things that I thought that I loved, they don't taste the same anymore and they may not taste the same because they're not made the same. But if we're not paying attention, we don't even realize that.

So, like Haagen-Dazs bars don't taste the same to me. There are a lot of things that I ate growing up indiscriminately that now my taste buds have become more discerning and they don't taste as good to me and I don't eat them anymore. I have dropped them from the list.

There are some exceptions. I still love Oreo cookies. And I still love the chocolate Hostess cupcakes and I've become a big ingredients reader, and let me just tell you, don't read the ingredients on any Hostess product. You know, there's a joke about how many hundreds of years they can last

Ep #16: Attentive Eating

without going bad, and I can believe that because there's probably like 50 ingredients on the back of those cupcakes.

But that's my road trip treat. When we take a road trip, I will treat myself to the chocolate Hostess cupcakes that have the little white swirl of icing on top and the white cream inside. And it has to be Hostess. There are pretenders out there. I don't do Little Debbie and there's some other pretenders. It has to be Hostess. Which is good because it's hard to find those Hostess cupcakes on the road. So that really works out pretty well.

Another benefit of eating attentively is that you become less distracted, of course, because you are not eating distractedly, so you become less distracted. How many of you can connect to driving down the highway or a street and all of a sudden, you're miles down the road and you look up and you're like, how did I get here? Those miles have just not even registered with you?

I used to experience that all the time when I was deep in corporate burnout. And that's a stress signal. And eating attentively, again, transfers over into other areas of your life and you begin to pay more attention and notice what's going well and what's not going so well. Eating attentively is not some frivolous thing. It can generate small change in your life and major change in your life.

And it is something that you have to practice if you're not used to doing it, if you're used to just wolfing down your food or eating on the run, eating on the fly, then yes, this is a new muscle to build and it's so worthwhile to build it because a side benefit of it will probably be that you do drop some physical weight and you absolutely will become more aware of what's going on with you, what's going on in you, what's going on around you. It will just help you in so many ways.

If you have any questions about eating attentively or any tips that you want to learn about how to do it, of course, I highly recommend the BARE book if you don't already have it, and please reach out to me. I'm happy to answer your questions. This ends the episode on eating attentively. And let me know what the one thing, your one big takeaway from this episode is by

[Midlife Woman Redefined](#) with C. René Washington

Ep #16: Attentive Eating

either sending me an email, or as always, I'm so appreciative if you leave a rating and review.

And remember, you get the directions for rating and reviewing, which also enters you in the drawing, by going to crenecoach.com/podcastlaunch. The link is provided in the show notes and you will need to leave your email contact so you can be properly entered in the drawing, otherwise your review tag won't give me that contact info. And I do want you to enter the drawing because the great giveaway prizes are you get the choice of a 90-minute coaching session with me, which is even more valuable now since I won't be coaching much longer individually, or a \$100 gift certificate to your favorite spa.

Remember, if you have a dream and you need a plan, then each week, I'm sharing tips, resources, tools, and real-life examples of how to make your dream life a reality. So come eon back to *Midlife Woman Redefined* next week. Remember, living well is the only option.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Midlife Woman Redefined. If you're ready to learn more and reclaim your time, head over to crenecoach.com.