nourish

A short, practical guide to finding balance using foods and mealtimes as a strong foundation

By Katie Sheen
Hello and welcome

Have you ever watched a butterfly against a windowpane, getting more and more stressed as it bounces against the same piece of glass over and over? Don’t you wish that it would stop for a moment, notice that the window is actually open, and then calmly walk a few steps to the edge of the window frame and fly away?

This little book is to help us stop bouncing around like that butterfly, stuck in damaging habits that we can’t see clearly. When we stop for a moment and breathe, then we can reconnect with the food on our plate or in our hand. We can also calmly notice our thoughts around our eating and drinking patterns. This gives us the insight that we need in order to gently move in a different direction, and experience for ourselves that wonderful sensation of freedom.

To help you practice the ideas put forward in this book, I have designed a Mindful Eating Food Diary called ‘Nourish’. This is a totally free photographic food diary that is simple to use from any device that can get online, and you can explore all that it has to offer at www.soulnutrition.org

I wish you countless moments of liberation.

Katie Sheen

Founder of Soul Nutrition & Astro Brain Tumour Fund
Grateful to be working in partnership with Matthew’s Friends
Internally, our body constantly shifts things around in response to the environment that we create, in order to bring all our body systems and functions back into balance.

If we are imbalanced internally, we also feel imbalanced externally; yet not all of us are aware of the power of this internal – external dialogue.

Pause a moment.

Create Space to Listen, to Think, and to Play around with the Balance of foods that suits you best.

You can always use mealtimes as creative thinking opportunities.

If you need new thoughts & insights to bring clarity to your life, how will you hear them if you don’t create space in which they can be heard?
SHIFT

Shift from irregular eating patterns to using relaxed mealtimes to balance your days.

Play around with your eating patterns and notice the effects on how you feel both physically & emotionally if you skip meals, or if you put off eating until your hunger is just too powerful to ignore.

How much difference does it make to your energy levels and mood if you then get ahead of your hunger the next day, and eat at more regular times? Does it affect the food choices that you make?

How long between meals seems to suit you best? Do you prefer 3 big meals a day, one every 5 hours? Or does life feel better if you eat smaller meals every 3 or 4 hours?

Do you prefer to eat a big breakfast, small lunch & a big evening meal? Or are you happier eating a big lunch, with breakfast & evening meals being smaller? Do you need some snacks to keep you going, or not?


Where do the rules that you live by come from? What happens if you change them so that they suit you better?
Before you eat, breathe.

Instead of rushing around 24/7, try breathing 4/7 before you eat: so breathe in for the count of 4, and out for the count of 7.

This slows down your breathing and in turn your whole body, so that you are ready to eat and are quiet enough to hear the messages that your body sends you to let you know when you are hungry and when you are comfortably full.

So why not sit down somewhere calm with a view, or even a picture instead of real scenery.

Treat yourself to flowers or herbs in a pot on the table.

Turn off the TV and perhaps put on some relaxing music to create an atmosphere that brings you happiness.

Ignore the world for a while and use mealtimes as a welcome opportunity to grab a few relaxed moments for you in your day.
Focus on the balance of your food.

See what happens to your health & happiness if you shift the balance of food on your plate so all that all major food groups are represented at every meal including breakfast.

Maybe use this food plate as a starting point; eat meals in this proportion for a couple of weeks and notice if it makes any difference to how you feel both physically and emotionally.

What thoughts come up for you?
Don’t judge them.
Just accept them with compassion and wonder why those thoughts are there. There are usually reasons why they appear even if it’s just to make us laugh once we become aware of them.

My Food Plate

At each meal, start by serving yourself a selection of vegetables to fill half of your plate. Choose a protein portion approximately the same size as the palm of your hand. Then choose starchy carbohydrates to match the size of the protein portion. How does it feel to play around with these proportions? What makes you feel great?

- **Vegetables**: at least 2 or 3 different types with each meal. Eat a variety of fruit and enjoy the seasons as their availability changes throughout the year.
- **Protein**: meat or fish, poultry, eggs, beans, peas, pulses, lentils, nuts, seeds, full fat dairy products.
- **Starchy Carbs**: unrefined wholegrains or potatoes, alternating with vegetables such as celeriac, swede, squashes and pumpkin.

Everyone is unique, so explore the balance that works best for you using the online food diary ‘Nourish’ at www.soulnutrition.org

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Always make Shifts one Step at a time.

Take a look at the food clouds on the following pages and choose one to play with first.

Grab yourself a pen or pencil or even a paintbrush and use colours if that makes you happy.
Use the key on each diagram to indicate how you will shift the balance of your food choices.

You can number the chosen foods too if you like, so that you can shift how often you eat them in the order that you will enjoy most.
Or just see what you can buy and go with the flow.

If you don’t know what certain foods are or how to cook them, how are you going to learn more?
Will you search the internet for easy, inspiring recipes?
Check out videos of how to prepare them?
Ask a friend or family member for help?
Sign up for a cookery course?
Ask for help on social media?
Look through cookery books that you already have, or invest in a new one?

The foods on each cloud are not a complete list of everything edible on our planet, so feel free to add more or to shift foods from one cloud to another if you want to be very specific about definitions of each food group. Please make them your own!
You have been given a gift of every animal protein under the sun. Which would you use?

KEY

Tick, circle or put a smiley face by everything that you already eat

? Put a question mark by foods that you would eat but are not sure how to prepare

?? Put two question marks if you are not sure what they are or where to buy them!

X Cross out things that you wouldn’t eat

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You have been given a gift of every plant protein under the sun. Which would you use?

**KEY**

😊 Tick, circle or put a smiley face by everything that you already eat

❓ Put a question mark by foods that you would eat but are not sure how to prepare

❓❓ Put two question marks if you are not sure what they are or where to buy them!

❌ Cross out things that you wouldn’t eat

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The name ‘protein’ comes from the Greek word ‘proteios’ meaning ‘of first importance’ because without enough protein we fall apart both physically & emotionally.

This is because our body breaks apart the protein that we eat into different building blocks called ‘amino acids’ then it puts those building blocks back together in different shapes to make structures that we need.

So for example: protein forms the basis of muscles, ligaments, tendons, skin, hair and nails. Protein also forms the neurotransmitters that carry our thoughts & emotions, so we need to eat protein to be able to think straight and to be happy. Protein is crucial for the production of energy and is also needed to make red & white blood cells.

It forms the basis of our genetic material.

Protein is even crucial for digestive enzymes so without it we can’t digest any other foods.

In fact carriers made from proteins carry nutrients around our body so you can eat as many vitamins & minerals as you like but they won’t get into your cells to do any good if you don’t eat enough protein.
So there are many reasons why all foods that nature produces for us contain some protein. It is just the proportion of protein to carbohydrate that varies from one food to another. So, animal proteins contain more protein relative to carbohydrate than plant proteins do. However, all fruits & vegetables, beans, pulses & grains contain some protein; it is just that in comparison it isn’t as much so you need to eat more of them to get the same total amount of protein.

We are back to balance again.

Which balance of plant & animal proteins suits you best?

If you tend to cook certain dishes using just meat, try adding some plant proteins. So for example pad out your meaty casseroles, curries and pasta sauces with lentils or beans and lots of extra vegetables. Does it lighten your food bills as well as the way that you feel after you have eaten?

If you don’t want to eat meat, are you eating enough plant proteins? Would you feel happier if you ate more?

Would you feel better if you ate a different balance of foods?
You have been given a gift of every vegetable under the sun. Which would you use?

KEY

😊 Tick, circle or put a smiley face by everything that you already eat
❓ Put a question mark by foods that you would eat but are not sure how to prepare
❓❓ Put two question marks if you are not sure what they are or where to buy them!
❌ Cross out things that you wouldn’t eat
Yes, we know, vegetables contain lots of important vitamins & minerals & fibre & phytonutrients that they produce to help themselves survive and that we in turn can eat to help us survive.

Thank-you.

But their name comes from the Latin “vegetale” meaning “to enliven” and perhaps that is the most important thing to thank them for.

Throw your own rulebook out of the window. Do you cook certain vegetables one certain way? Do you save raw vegetables only for salads? Why is that? Why not mix things up a bit?

Go wild.

Eat a combination of hot & cold vegetables at the same meal.

Eat more of what you like. Just increase the portion sizes of the vegetables you eat already until between them they cover half of your plate.

When you get bored, add new vegetables to increase the variety.
Fling fresh & frozen vegetables to cook in as many saucy dishes as you can. Always revisit vegetables that you think you don’t like and try cooking them a new way to change the final flavour.

Perhaps it was a ridiculous recipe or a boring, thoughtless cooking method and not the fabulous vegetable that made you think “yuck” instead of “yum”.

A strange thing about vegetables is that slicing them into different shapes often makes them taste quite different. So if you aren’t keen on carrots sliced into circles, try them sliced lengthways into sticks, cut into large chunks or teeny cubes, or grated raw.

If you still don’t like a particular vegetable, try a different recipe or just hide it from yourself by chopping it as small as possible and mixing it into a strong flavoured sauce. It is quite surprising how much stuff you can hide in a pasta sauce, a casserole or a curry.
You have been given a gift of every fruit under the sun. Which would you use?

**KEY**

- Tick, circle or put a smiley face by everything that you already eat
- Put a question mark by foods that you would eat but are not sure how to prepare
- Put two question marks if you are not sure what they are or where to buy them!
- Cross out things that you wouldn’t eat
No wonder that fruit makes such a special treat or dessert. The name comes from the Latin ‘fructus’ meaning ‘enjoyment’.

Variety is key here as every fruit, like every vegetable, contains different nutrients depending upon the soil and region in which it was grown, the weather as it burst into life & flourished, the way in which the farmer treated it, the time when it was picked, the way it was transported and how it was stored.

For example: did you know that in one apple orchard the nutrient content of each apple depends upon the side of the orchard on which the apple grew, the side of the tree that it hung upon, and within that one apple one side will contain different nutrients depending upon the way in which the rays of the sun fell upon it?

So just as we are all similar in some ways and unique in others, so is every plant.
You have been given a gift of every grain under the sun. Which would you use?

**Quinoa**

Amaranth

**Rice;** arborio, brown, red, basmati, long grain, short grain, wild rice

Corn / Maize / Polenta

**Rye**

**Barley**

**Tapioca**

Millet

Oats

**Buckwheat**

Sago

**Durum Wheat**

Einkorn

**Wheat**

Grano

Farro/Emmer

Triticale

Wheat Berries

**Spek**

Kamut

Couscous

Sorghum / Milo

**Sorghum / Milo**

**Oats**

**Bulgur Wheat**

**Bulgur Wheat**

**Semolina**

**Wheat**

**Wheat Berries**

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Grains are the fruit of a cereal plant.

Which balance of grains suits you best?

As you explore this question, become aware of the grains hidden in foods in the form of flour.

For example, wheat flour forms the basis of most bread, toast, muffins, crumpets, pancakes, waffles, cakes, biscuits, cereal bars, sandwiches, breakfast cereals, pizza and pasta.

If you eat these food products every few hours you are also eating wheat every few hours. Yet if you ate a certain vegetable this often you would think that was weird.

So why not view the wheat family in the same way?
Now that you have played with your food choices, which balance suits you best at the moment?

Remember though that when the balance of life changes we usually need to adjust the balance of our food choices to support ourselves in these new circumstances.

A child does not eat the same amount or the same balance of foods as a teenager, an active adult, or a sedentary elderly person. Are you aware of how the balance of your foods needs to shift over time to keep you feeling happy & healthy?

Make sure that you don’t box yourself in with rules & regulations that you choose to live by at certain life stages.

Never stop gently playing with the balance of your food.

Small shifts are part of the fun and we are never too old to enjoy using stepping stones to get to where we want to be.