

# Food is an “F” Word ...*but what an F Word!*

©Gwen McCauley, 2006, Odysseys Unlimited Inc.

As I've moved through the myriad small experiences that typically add up to what I call 'my life' I've become aware of a subtle conversation I'm having with myself; my own personal Muzak, if you will. But before I share with you what the conversation that has been making itself known to me is all about, let me provide you with a bit of context about how the past few days haven't been ordinary ones for me.

For some time now I haven't been happy with the way I've been feeling in my body: frequently achy and creaky in the joints, with a mind that too often feels like someone has placed little bits of cotton wool between the cogs! Nothing drastically wrong, but just feeling like the old organic bioprocessor wasn't keeping up with the demands of life like it used to. I tried exercising and while it helped, I didn't feel better about life. Getting extra sleep didn't seem to make much difference either. I cut out alcohol, sugar and caffeine which helped a bit but didn't get me back to operating the way I recall as "the real Gwen". I was beginning to wonder if those days were just a distant memory!

And then a good buddy and I decided to engage an 11-day cleansing fast. I'll spare you all the grim details of what goes into my mouth and what doesn't these days, but suffice it to say that it's not a lot. I'm day 8 into the process and am extremely grateful to have a companion on the journey because it hasn't felt easy. Physically I am feeling wonderful: I feel energized and I'm sleeping better. I feel like I "see" the world more clearly. My aches and pains have disappeared and despite it being peak gardening season all the bending and stooping is having little affect on my joints. Physically I don't even feel all that hungry.

But mentally it is a whole other kettle of fish. I've become aware of just how many of my thoughts are related to food: buying it; preparing it; serving it; eating it. I've also noticed the incredible volume of food commercials (as well as digestion related pharmaceuticals) on TV. And there have been a few times when I've "snuck" some treats.

I use that word advisedly because I haven't really "snuck" them. I've been very open and above board about it. But I've been aware inside that it feels like I am sneaking things; pulling the wool over the eyes of some nameless authority figure. I've also discovered an inner conversation of defiance associated with 'sneaking' the treats (when did a raw carrot become a treat, I wonder?) And I realize that I am being defiant towards that same nameless authority figure ...who really is me. Because I'm the one who made the decision to interrupt my typical eating patterns so I don't have anyone else to defy or be resentful of for my being in this place.

Now there's an insight for me to work with and allow my body to relax into and see what else there is to be discovered in all of this. Who is this imaginary authority figure that is a part of me? How does she serve me? How does she work to keep me in line? In what way is it all backfiring on me because I end up doing the opposite of what the authority figure wants out of belligerence, defiance and resentment? But I think processing that insight by deeply exploring where these questions fire off in my body will best wait until I am back eating regularly and my body is not so preoccupied with conversations about the absence of food.

Interestingly I have come to a place over these 8 days where I am having the undeniable experience of the presence of the absence of something. By that I mean that in the absence of food I have become aware of the presence of something else. That conversation I mentioned in my opening paragraph.

And it goes something like this:

In having made this choice to fast, I am aware of how much I enjoy everything in my life associated with food. I am missing my early Saturday morning trips to the grocer where I get to revel in the sensuousness of selecting fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, cheeses and breads. I am missing my daily check-ins with my body and my husband to decide what we'll eat for dinner. I am missing the moment of inspiration when an actual meal plan comes together in my head. And I am missing the pleasure of scraping, peeling, chopping, sautéing, braising, smelling, tasting and seasoning the meals that delight us both.

I'm actually missing those processes much more than I'm missing the food itself. Although I do admit that what is also present in the absence of food is a heightened awareness of how refreshing it is to crunch into a juicy apple or munch through a crispy salad, how satisfying it is to sip a hot soup or savor a hearty stew.

I know that when the weekend arrives I'll return to my life altered from this experience. I'm already aware that there are certain food choices that will no longer appeal. But more importantly, I know that those very ordinary moments in my unfolding life won't seem so ordinary anymore. I'll appreciate all those trips for groceries; I'll delight even more in warm summer evenings with the barbeque blazing; I'll treasure the scent of the herbs I collect from my tiny garden patch all the more. I'll recognize and honor within myself the importance that food has in my life ...not simply for acquiring nutrition and sustenance ...but as a crucible for processes that are soothing, nurturing, creative and invitational. And at some point when I have relaxed into these wonderful daily experiences, I'll call up my defiance of that part of me that is the authority figure and I'll make friends with it. ...and then I'll get to see what else becomes possible for me.

*About Gwen McCauley: Coach, educator, writer and veteran of the 'employee to entrepreneur' transformation process. With wit, wisdom and worldly experience, Gwen invites her clients on a journey of self-discovery, gaining clarity of purpose and increasing self-awareness and resourcefulness. Gwen brings a strong background as a corporate executive with extensive management experience to her work. She founded Odysseys Unlimited Inc. (OUI) in 1997 and is a co-founder of the WEL-Systems® Institute. Gwen has an MA in Human Systems Intervention from Concordia University and a successful track record as a coach, program leader and businesswoman. In addition to being a WEL-Systems Educator™, CODE Model™ Coach and Quantum TLC™ Facilitator, Gwen has studied Open Space Technology, Myers Briggs, Appreciative Inquiry, Generative Leadership and Total Quality Management. Gwen published her first book "The Alchemy of Energy: Exploring The CODE Model" in 2004 and co-authored "Sekhmet Rising: the restlessness of women's genius" with 17 other women in 2006. She is currently working on her third book.*

This article may only be reproduced provided it is reproduced in its entirety with appropriate acknowledgement of the author, the source, and a weblink to [www.ouicoach.com](http://www.ouicoach.com).