

Tips for How to Use Food to Balance our Emotions

Ayurveda, the traditional system of healing in India, sees food as energy. Energy which can be used to keep our body, mind and emotions balanced. It uses the Law of Opposites in addressing this question of balance. What does this mean in practice? Essentially it means balancing the qualities in our bodily experience with food having the opposite qualities. For example if we are feeling cold, warm food is advocated, if feeling heavy, light food is recommended.

In this simple and yet remarkably effective process, we first need to tap into our bodily experience. We can do this by closing our eyes, connecting with our body through breathing consciously, and then asking ourselves the question, "How do I feel? Physically? Emotionally? Mentally?" We then wait and see what answer, if any, comes to us.

If you are feeling cold, dry, perhaps a little 'spacey' or anxious, we would favour food that is warming, cooked, mildly spiced and moist, such as soups, dahls and casseroles with adequate amounts of good quality salt. This will help to keep us warm and grounded.

If you are feeling hot and dry, perhaps irritated or frustrated, we would favour food that is cold in temperature, cooling in nature and moist, such as salads, fresh juice blends, cold soups or quiches. These foods keep us calm and cool.

If you are feeling cold and heavy, perhaps lethargic, "stuck" or gloomy; we would favour foods that are warming, well spiced, dry and light, such as stir fries and dry curries. Foods that are stimulating in nature.

If you are feeling depleted physically and emotionally, favour light, easy to digest foods such as soups, especially made with root vegetables and spiced with digestive spices like cumin, coriander, turmeric and curry leaf. These foods will help us feel well nourished.

If you are feeling like you are on an emotional roller-coaster, favour a light diet and consider missing a meal and replacing it with a herbal tea or light soup. Eat a more substantial meal when feeling less emotionally provoked. Sucking on a few cardamom seeds or having a warming herbal tea such ginger can often be helpful. This will help us lighten the load on our digestive system.

As the saying goes, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." So experiment with some of these suggestions and see for yourself their effect! Our own experience is the gold standard in Ayurveda, which we use to assess the effects of food on our body, mind and emotions.

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