

Hi there, and welcome back to health bite the podcast committed to providing you small actionable bites towards better physical, mental and emotional well-being. I wanted to talk a little bit about falling off the wagon. Whether we're talking about vacation, or the holidays, or personal celebrations, like birthdays or anniversaries, there are so many times on the calendar when we are faced with potential dietary or lifestyle-related setbacks. The question always is, how can I manage my food while I travel? Or what do I eat at that holiday meal or celebration? Sure, there are some practical strategies that I share. I think what is most important is not the practical strategies but once again, the mindset. Let's face it, it's not so much about the poolside drinks or even the five pounds of potentially weight gain that gets in the way of our path. But it's the way in which we hold these things in mind. How much catastrophize let it define feeling guilty about ruminating over is what really gets us quote off our wagon. All of which affect our ability to really stay in the game. This is a long game and more on that later.

First, let's talk a little bit about how we approach these moments. So often when we go on vacation, we decide in advance that we're going to flip a switch, and we're just going to go overboard. We decide we're going to overindulge. We decide we're going to eat and drink whatever we can and keep up our plates at the buffet. Take advantage of all you can eat for dinner because vacation has to be overindulgent, right? That if we don't take advantage of every morsel, it would be gone. What if we took away this mindset? The mindset of FOMO or fear of missing out on food? Without all the mindset around scarcity, we could allow ourselves to eat what we want and how we want. Make mindful choices about what to eat or not to eat, and what to indulge in or not. Allowing ourselves to make a mindful choice, moment to moment based on our hunger or even on our desire for that matter, is different than deciding in advance that this is how it should be. Because we're on vacation, we should fully indulge in everything and anything in the name of vacation. What's more, is that a mindful approach will give us more enjoyment and more enjoyment of the food that we consume. Because we are present, we are in it. We are responding to our hunger or craving or desire and we are truly able to savor it as opposed to this autopilot mindset that really takes us away from presence.

This mindset allows you to really decide what you are or are not hungry for. You can decide that you already had pancakes yesterday and you don't really desire to have them again. Or maybe you decide to eat a lighter meal because you want to feel lighter while sitting in the hot sun or sightseeing that day. Again, if we change the meaning of vacation and relaxation away from this **obligatory indulgence**, and to what it really is right. Vacation is time to unwind, time to reconnect with what matters including ourselves, friends, family, and with nature. Vacation time takes on a whole new meaning and what it is actually intended for. Another common mindset I see around vacation and tell me if you can relate is **ditching exercise**. Sometimes this is because we feel like we've indulged too much in food or drink and in our minds, we think, "Oh, well, we blew it anyway." Since we ate ice cream today, we might as well not move our bodies either. Any way you look at it, this mindset does not make sense. We move for the sake of movement, not to punish or to rectify our eating choices. Another common reason for not moving is that well, it's vacation, so I shouldn't have to exercise. But what if you've chosen to have a vacation on a beautiful island? The scenery, the climate, the ocean, the nature, is the very reason that you've chosen that destination? Why wouldn't you take advantage of that

beauty by exploring it with walking, swimming, and or hiking? If we think of it in these terms, it actually makes sense to engage in movement while vacationing.

It is really how we hold it in our mind if you choose not to exercise or move. It is really your mindful choice at the moment, but be cognizant of how you're labeling. How you are thinking or holding this thing in mind and how that affects your choices. If we think of exercise as punishment, as we often do in our culture, then it becomes a chore or something that we should avoid while vacationing. So again, be mindful of how you hold it in mind. If we allowed ourselves to engage in it and enjoy it, then we would likely be delighted and joyful to partake in activity now that we have the time for it. Now that we have a beautiful space for it. Now that we are on vacation and well-rested for it.

Now let's imagine another super common scenario. Yes, you did go on vacation, you indulge daily on decadent food, and you did not lift a finger. Now you're back at home with weight gain. Now my first question is, did you enjoy yourself? So revel in that enjoyment? Be glad you had the opportunity. Know that you made a mindful choice to engage, indulge to kick back, and not move. If that's what you chose to do, revel in it and move on. Because let's face it, weight gain is really not the issue. The five pounds, even 10 pounds is not the issue. The narrative is I'm off the wagon, I screwed up, how can I recover? I cannot recover. This narrative leads to negative thinking, negative self-judgment, and ultimately sabotage. That my friends is what it really means to be off the wagon. Of course, there's a scientific study that actually proved this to be the case. In it, people were asked to rate their, quote, dietary setbacks on a scale of one to ten in terms of how consequential they thought it was. So rate your setback as one, if it was no biggie. Rate your dietary setback as ten, if you feel like it really was this tremendous error that you cannot recover from. They found that those people who rated their setbacks as high, meaning that they viewed them as very significant. They will be much less likely to resume healthy dietary habits and healthy lifestyle practices like exercise, etc. Meaning they were much less likely to get on the wagon again. So consider this, that when you have a dietary setback, or when you have a mindful choice in vacationing, or holidays, or occasions, consider what truly causes you to get off the wagon. What truly causes self-sabotage and do yourself a favor. When you decide to indulge, make it a choice. Enjoy that meal. Enjoy that celebration. Enjoy that vacation, be mindful, be present, savor it and then move on. Don't catastrophize it. Don't overthink it. Don't over-identify it. Just move on. Because the only thing that is getting in the way of you and that wagon is you.

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