

Think Yourself Thin

“SAVORING” THE NEW WEIGHT-LOSS SECRET

THE BELL RANG ONCE, and everyone laid down their chopsticks for a moment of quiet reflection. It rang again, and the eating resumed. Each bite was to be experienced fully: What textures could be felt on the tongue? When did a food’s flavor “pop”—right away or after a moment of chewing? What sensations surfaced in the body as eating continued? Kimberly Rodriguez, 35, an administrative assistant in Chicago, enrolled in a silent Buddhist retreat to find better life balance and came away with the discovery of “enlightened eating.”

COUNTERINTUITIVE EATING

Like many who struggle to stay slim in a society where supersized portions and dieting are the

norm, Rodriguez had learned to ignore her natural eating cues. “Striking a balance between hunger and fullness was not easy,” she recalls. The retreat revealed the benefits of tuning in; afterwards, Rodriguez found that paying closer attention to what, and how, she was eating helped her avoid consuming to the point of feeling stuffed.

“Most people eat on automatic pilot,” says Jean Kristeller, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Indiana State University in Terre Haute. For over 15 years, Kristeller has been studying how Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) might help to curb eating binges. It’s a system that uses meditation and mindfulness-based exercises, such as chewing food slowly and appreciating foods’ flavors and textures, to teach people to pay attention to hunger and satiety cues.

Her latest study of 85 obese people with binge-eating disorder suggests that MB-EAT may also aid in weight loss.

