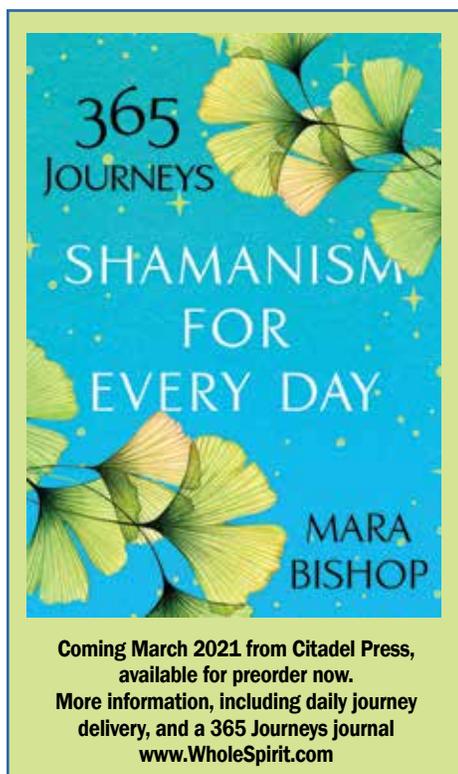


# Eating *As a Daily Practice*

By Mara Bishop, MS, TBM, CSC

**O**ur bodies, minds, and spirits are involved when we eat; choosing how we engage with our food can impact all three. For those of us with specific health issues related to food—such as allergies, weight issues, and eating disorders—attention to eating is less a choice than a necessity. Some of us don't have enough food for our families or ourselves, or lack access to healthy choices. If we are lucky enough to be free of significant health constraints and to have the luxury of food security, it's easier to focus on ways of eating that weave body, mind, and spirit into powerful daily practices.

In my 365 Journeys program (now a book, *Shamanism for Every Day: 365 Journeys*), I provide daily ideas for connecting with our innate knowledge about “feeding” ourselves. Some days that information is literally about food, such as “What foods does my body need today to be strong and healthy?” On other days, the topics are about managing emotions, creating healthy relationships, or connecting with seasonal cycles. A spiritual practice of any kind can be hard to begin and even harder to maintain. It's one of the reasons why I started 365 Journeys, and often suggest to my clients to find things they are already doing to use as cues



for daily practices. Eating is perfect, since we already eat several times a day. Without changing what you're eating, you can tend to your health while you're eating. Try one of these ideas:

**Give Thanks Before Eating:** Pause before your meal or snack to express gratitude—for the cooks, animals, or vegetables that contributed to what you are eating, for having something to eat, for where you are eating, for whom you are eating with. That pause for gratitude is powerful. Studies show that expressing gratitude before meals can improve sleep and heart health, and lower stress levels. A daily practice paired with something you are already doing can have concrete physical and psychological benefits.

**Cook With Love and Intention:** The physical ingredients of what we eat are hugely important; but how we prepare food matters too. Have you ever eaten meals prepared by someone who was putting their whole heart into it? When we cook with a loving heart the ingredients transform. Experiment for yourself, maybe repeating a loving mantra, such as “May you be healthy and happy,” as you cook (and eat).

**Eat With Your Ancestors:** Does your family have treasured recipes, or food that is meaningful to share together? If so, making that food can be part of a spiritual practice that strengthens not only your body, but also your connection to those who came before. When we make the food of our ancestors, we honor them. Preparing those foods helps give us perspective, especially while remembering the people who made them previously, or thinking about the countries or cultures from which the food came. When we eat these foods, we honor our place in the long chain of human existence, which will (hopefully) continue with our descendants after we're gone.

**Make Each Bite Count:** Whether it's an apple or a bag of chips eaten between appointments during a busy day, or a long relaxing meal shared with your soul mate by candlelight, savor each bite, chew carefully, and pause to really experience the sensations of eating. According to an article published by Harvard Health Publishing, eating mindfully can help treat eating disorders and improve mood.

**Feed Your Neighbor:** Sharing food is a big part of creating community. Food insecurity is a huge issue. If possible, donate to local organizations that help provide healthy food to those in need.

How we purchase, prepare, and consume food, affects us. It can also affect the people we are close to, and many people we may never



come in contact with, but who had a hand in bringing food to our tables. More suggestions for creating healthy relationship with food are in *Shamanism for Every Day: 365 Journeys*. When we treat our eating like a series of small simple rituals, eating becomes part of a powerful daily practice. **h&h**

1. Gregoire, C., “The Psychological Benefits of Saying Grace,” *Huffington Post*, Nov 20, 2014, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/benefits-of-saying-grace\\_n\\_6200202](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/benefits-of-saying-grace_n_6200202)
2. “Mindful Eating,” *Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School*, February 2011, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/mindful-eating>

*Mara has worked in the fields of intuition and shamanism since 1995. In her Personal Evolution Counseling™ practice, she combines shamanic healing, intuitive consultations, and energetic healing. Mara is the author of Shamanism for Every Day: 365 Journeys and Inner Divinity: Crafting Your Life with Sacred Intelligence and the companion series of guided meditations. Her training includes psychology, shamanism, energy medicine and theology. She is a leader in the Shamanism Without Borders program, is the only Harner Certified Shamanic Counselor® in North Carolina, and is a Reiki Master Teacher.*

**For more information, contact**  
**WholeSpirit**  
[www.WholeSpirit.com](http://www.WholeSpirit.com)  
[mara@wholespirit.com](mailto:mara@wholespirit.com)  
**Telephone: (919) 419-1074**