Just One Bite
Take the challenge!

One of the most common thinking patterns that can sabotage your eating behaviour is ‘all-or-nothing’ thinking. A job isn’t complete if it isn’t perfect. You need to score 10 out of 10 or there is no use trying. Sound familiar? Another message you may have been taught from a young age is to ‘finish everything on your plate’. This lesson is usually accompanied by the message, ‘It’s bad to waste food’. As a result, you may feel that it is necessary to eat everything that you are served or to finish all the contents of a package, including every last crumb!

Studies have shown that people are more successful when making long-term eating changes if they can limit the ‘all-or-nothing’ thinking pattern and become more flexible with their self-imposed eating rules. However, this is easier said than done. It takes focus and practice.

Here is a simple challenge that will make you more aware of your thoughts. Once you can hear what you are saying to yourself, you will be in a position to change your self-talk which will help you change your eating.

Here’s what you do:

1. Whenever you eat a meal or snack, leave one bite uneaten. This would be one forkful or spoonful of food. It might be one small piece of a granola bar, a corner of a sandwich, one section of an orange or a couple of French fries, chips or candies.
2. Notice your thoughts as you do this. What messages are going through your mind? How are you responding to your thoughts?
3. Assess the level of difficulty you are experiencing as you take this challenge. Do you find it easy to throw away the bite of food? Is it more difficult to leave the small morsel uneaten with some foods versus other foods?
4. Continue to be curious about your response to this challenge. Keep challenging your thinking and eating patterns in this way and see if it becomes easier to leave one bite.

When I first tried this challenge, I couldn’t believe how difficult it was to leave one bite of my meal. It wasn’t as though I was still hungry. Yet, it was all I could do not to scoop that last bit of potato and vegetable and put it in my mouth. I kept thinking that I needed to clean my plate. It felt very awkward and uncomfortable to leave the meal unfinished. I wasn’t always successful at leaving one bite, but I kept trying. After a couple of weeks, it became easier but I had to keep telling myself that it was okay. There were times that I felt very empowered when I tossed the bite into the garbage. I even convinced myself not to feel guilty about doing it.