I love this season, when the intention is to share good cheer and the love and light that is inside each one of us with each other. All the good qualities that are valued across religious and spiritual practices of being a good person and member of this planet are emphasized such as kindness and generosity. Not just to share with our loved ones and inner circles but to the greater community and world at large. I wish that every day, we as a global community would put the greatest priority on these values and share them with each other, in work, play, family and greater community to guide all our choices and activities. It would be a very different world!

I have found mindfulness practices, the research-based practices of MB-EAT, mindful self-compassion and other practices from Buddhism, contemporary psychology and neuroscience to be foundational and life-changing in this work. It’s been 35 years since I first discovered regular meditation and movement practices (such as yoga and tai chi) and I continue to practice, teach, coach and deepen my own practice and studies every day.

I believe that we do all have these values, they light us up, especially all of you reading this, but they can get obscured and not expressed when we let the media overwhelm us and our inner obscurations such as anxiety, fear and the illusion of separateness from each other and the world. I know that it doesn't feel like an "illusion" at times. But this is what I love so much about the work that I do and share with others - it cuts to the core of what is most important. It offers clear step by step practices to cultivate mindfulness and the daily intention to cultivate kindness (towards self and others), good will, compassion, generosity, empathetic joy, and equanimity as beautiful antidote to all this. It helps us to become better human beings, our best selves and treat our own selves with kindness with our choices of self-care, our relationship to food, our bodies guided by compassion, caring, new skills, and by extension to others.  When we learn to practice and turn the light of awareness on our own minds and hearts, and the intentions that guide us, our inner and outer worlds change.

I invite you to enjoy a few adapted excerpts from my book "Well Nourished" chosen especially and edited for the holiday season below. Then check out some of our awesome New Year special offers for [personal coaching] or [professional teacher training in mindful eating and mindfulness or in [the Well Nourished Coach Training program] and upcoming in person retreats.

***Stress and Eating*** - *Inviting the Resource of Pleasure, Balance and Calm through Mindfulness*

When we are feeling overwhelmed, stressed or unfulfilled, we may turn to food to fill a need to try and feel better in that moment. We might seek to "find balance and well-being" through overeating (and/or restricting) We are missing the resource, balance and nourishment of personal practices, relaxing, fulfilling and fun activities in our lives to invite well-being, meaning, purpose and equanimity.  As we know well, the pleasure that food brings and a sense of well-being is only very temporary and fleeting if we are eating only to soothe. Without the wisdom of mindfulness practices, we can eat too much or eat foods that make us feel unwell on a regular basis or eat in a way that doesn't provide enough nourishment.

Distressing emotions from stress can lead to overeating for some. Having a balance of pleasurable, relaxing and nourishing activities with mindfulness practices helps the nervous system reset.  
   
Mindfulness meditation is not only a practice that cultivates mindful awareness, helps you learn to respond rather than react to your experiences, but it also elicits the relaxation response while you are practicing. A student spoke recently of her experience of meditating. In the beginning, she was aware of many thoughts and some agitation in her mind, but at the same time she was aware that her body was becoming calmer and more peaceful. She practiced not reacting or engaging with the thoughts. By doing  
so, she wasn’t adding to any more thought or 'feeling ripples' in her mind and eventually touched into a quieter practice, permeated with calm and peace.    
   
Bringing a mindful pause to the moments of your day with breath awareness or a few intentional deeper breaths can also help still any agitation in the mind and prevent any further spiraling out. A mindful pause can offer some relaxation, or return to baseline, with the important benefit of clear seeing –thoughts, feelings, emotions- It helps you see what is true for you in this moment, identifying any need you might have to help you come back to balance. You can make "the nourishing choice".  
   
Practicing mindfulness, mindful eating, relaxation, and engaging in the total body and life nourishment practices that the "Well Nourished Approach offers build resilience to  
stress and the mounting concerns in the world and provides coping tools and practices that can bring you out of the stress response much sooner, so the body, mind and heart can naturally recover and return to homeostasis.

A mindful pause or mindful "check in" is fundamental to the Well Nourished Lifestyle and leads to the ability to see clearly, invite uplifting qualities of the heart, and make beneficial self-care choices, and those that will benefit others, society and the world. Inviting in nourishing practices and activities, both through inner and outer nourishment, helps us to return to the balance and joy of living we seek for ourselves and others, physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, socially, creatively, intellectually and worldly - in all areas of our lives.

Check out the [‘Well Nourished’ book] for more practices to total body-mind-heart nourishment and any of the programs below.