

Macrobiotics America

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No! and Know

by **David Briscoe**

I believe that knowledge is freeing. As a macrobiotic counselor, I am primarily an educator, not a doctor or healthcare practitioner. I don't "treat" people. I try to educate them in the practical daily application of the truly dynamic macrobiotic principles. This is not something that can be done in a single consultation visit. It takes patience on the person's part and on my part, because we are not raised in a culture of patience. We are steeped in the modern hurry-up way of "do this, swallow this, inject this, do as I say." So a macrobiotic counselor/educator has to understand the modern mind, how it's been conditioned and educated, and its habits. I have to be able to put myself in another's shoes if I am to be successful at educating them to be a free-thinking person in a modern, hurry-up and impatient world. Just throwing my own favorite concepts or beautiful cosmic philosophies at them won't work. As an educator, I have to work hard in order to be a good "farmer" who can determine the best way to prepare the earth so that it can receive and hold the seeds. Then I have to clearly see how to nourish and care for the seeds so they can grow and bear fruit.

It has often been said to me by various individuals practicing macrobiotics that they don't know why they are avoiding certain foods and eating others. They say, "I don't know why, but my counselor told me to do it this way." To me, this approach to macrobiotics is misguided and may lead to fanaticism, dependence and misunderstanding. It is living in what I call the "Valley of 'No'". In the Valley of No, one practices macrobiotics because someone said "no fruit" or "no meat" or "no sugar." There may have been genuinely good reasons for these no's, but unfortunately, all too often, an individual is not taught carefully or clearly enough or he/she forgets what was explained to them verbally. Living in the Valley of No can be frustrating and depressing after awhile, and it is natural for someone who is stuck there, trying to practice macrobiotics with a burden of no's on his back, to give up. No one enjoys living with a weight of no's on her back. Eventually we all want to throw off such a weight in order to feel free again. In the Valley of No, fanaticism, rigidity and unhappiness can easily arise. It is dark and dreary because the sunlight of knowledge, self-reflection and free thinking do not shine there.

I like to encourage people to find ways of moving from the Valley of No to the mountaintop of "know". In other words, when you begin to make your choice from your own knowing and understanding, you can transform a dreary macrobiotic practice totally. In the Valley of No, many resentments and tensions can develop as the person attempts to do a macrobiotic practice, because we don't have basic knowledge of what we are doing. We are blindly following someone else and as experienced and respected as that counselor or author may be, we are still following them. Our practice is not based on our own knowing and understanding.

Yes, we can certainly learn from others, but it is our own application of what we learn that brings it to life. Concepts and philosophies are only words from another. They come to life when we apply them in our own daily living. Then, we see for ourselves if it works, makes sense and has value in our own lives. Then it becomes mine, it belongs to me, it lives in me because I have used it, applied it and gained from it. From that knowing and understanding, I can then make my own choices freely. Macrobiotic practice becomes mine. I do it because I want to, not because "I have to." I choose to eat or to not eat something because I decide to do that. In this, there is real freedom. There is no one to blame or to feel angry about, and I don't hold it against others if they don't make the same choices I make or that I think they should make. In my own freedom, I give others their freedom, too. Then, I totally do what I want based on my own understanding, free thinking, and free choice. Knowing becomes a living, breathing and changing awareness, because it is on-going and because I am open daily to learning and understanding. Yes, even if I have a serious disease like cancer, I must eventually come to my own understanding and make my own free choices about my diet and daily living. No one else can do it for me. Well-meaning friends and devoted loved ones of the seriously ill often have to learn this through much frustration, angst and difficulty.

Many people have said that we need to strictly guide and monitor those with serious illness because they are too confused, unable to make good judgments and unable to rely on their own intuition. It is true that many need guidance, but at the same time that we are giving guidance, we must be educating people on how they can set themselves free. I believe this should be from the start, not later after they have "recovered." I have seen very few recover from anything based just on doing what they were told to do. The ones who recover are the ones who really learn, who take the time to educate themselves, and who practice macrobiotics from their own developing knowledge and understanding. Blind followers are very slow when it comes to healing because blind following breeds resentment.

Weak and bed-ridden individuals will need close care and assistance in the beginning but eventually, if they are to recover, they will have to take deep, strong and personal charge of their own healing and do it from their own knowing, understanding and free choice. Freedom through understanding is the heartbeat of a spirited practice of macrobiotics.